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THE SCALE OF PERFECTION

BY
WALTER HILTON
Canon of Thurgarton

Newly Edited from MS. Sources
With an Introduction
BY
EVELYN UNDERHILL

**Ascendimus ascensiones in corde, et cantamus canticum
graduum. Igne tuo, igne tuo bono, inardescimus et
imus : quoniam sursum imus ad pacem Hierusalem.**

Aug. Conf. xiii. 9.

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INTRODUCTION

I

WALTER HILTON

WALTER HILTON occupies a central position in the small group of English mediaeval mystics ; being the third in time of its four outstanding personalities. Probably growing up during the life-time of Richard Rolle of Hampole (c. 1290–1349) and dying in 1396, he was the elder contemporary of Julian of Norwich (1343–c. 1413), whilst the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* wrote during, and probably early in, his religious life. The influence of Rolle, the most vital and individual of the English mystics, can be traced clearly in Hilton's writings ; especially in the lovely fragment called *The Song of Angels*. He often adopts Rolle's phrases and metaphors, such as heavenly song, honey, and the fire of love, and in spite of marked differences of temperament must be classed among his spiritual descendants. The teaching of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and of *Dionise Hid Divinite*—a translation by the same

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hand of the *Mystical Theology* of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite—have also affected him. Through his more simple, homely, and objective teaching upon the spiritual life, many of the doctrines of these great writers were diffused among the rank and file of devout Christians.

Probably no English devotional work has had so wide and enduring an influence as *The Scale of Perfection*. Circulated for over a century in numerous manuscripts, it was first printed in 1494,—an honour accorded neither to Rolle nor Julian of Norwich—and became thenceforth one of the favourite religious books of the laity. Yet of its author, his character and career, we know little beyond that which his work reveals to us. We can only guess at the influences which formed him, and the nature of his own interior life ; and even the date and place of his birth are unknown. Since the name Hilton or Hylton occurs frequently at this period in Yorkshire and also in Nottingham, it is supposed that he was of North Midland origin. Though some manuscripts of the “Scale” describe him as a Carthusian monk, and he seems to have been in close touch with members of that austere spiritual Order, it is now established that he was an Augustinian canon of Thurgarton Priory near Southwell in Nottinghamshire, where his works were probably

written. The title given to one MS. of a minor tract attributed to him, *Epistola Walteri Hylton quondam canonici in Thurgarton ad Adam Horslay monachum ordinis Cartusie in Bella Valle (Beauvale) in comitatu Notynghamie*, suggests the possibility, however, that his last years were spent elsewhere.¹ He may even have ended his life in a Charterhouse ; for, owing to the exceptional severity of the Carthusian rule, religious of other Orders were allowed to transfer to it. He died, according to the most trustworthy notices, on the Vigil of the Annunciation, March 24th, 1395-6.

We are not to infer from these facts that Hilton lived the life of a recluse, out of touch with practical affairs. Thurgarton was an important religious house. Its Prior, as the chief ecclesiastic of the district, had his own stall in Southwell Minster. If we can trust the existing lists of fourteenth century priors, it

¹ This work exists in three British Museum MSS., Roy. 6 E III, Roy. 8 A VII, and Harl. 3852 ; also in the Bodleian Digby MS. 33. I am indebted for this notice to the kindness of Mr. J. A. Herbert, Deputy Keeper of MSS. at the British Museum. Mr. Herbert has also drawn my attention to the *Speculum Religiosorum*, a tract addressed to "all professed canons of the Order of St. Augustine" by Brother Walter, Canon of Holy Trinity, London (Add. MS. 10052). Should this little work prove on examination to be in Hilton's manner, it would suggest at least the chance that he may have migrated to London towards the end of his life.

does not seem that Hilton himself ever occupied this position ; which was indeed more suited to a man of affairs than to a mystic, for the Priory administered large estates. Founded in the reign of Henry I and dedicated to St. Peter, it was endowed with the lands of Thurgarton and Fiskerton, and further enriched by later benefactors. By the middle of the fourteenth century it owned property in Nottingham, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, and had a cell at Fiskerton. The Prior, as a principal land-owner of the neighbourhood, is often mentioned in connection with public life. Thus in 1340 he was appointed by Edward III to collect the subsidies granted to the King by Parliament, including the “ $\frac{1}{9}$ th part of all sheaves wools and lambs,” in the county of Nottingham, and also “to sell the same and receive the money therefrom :” a piece of business which left him “no leisure for receiving the same in the county of Derby,” where another collector was therefore appointed.¹ It is clear from such notices as this, that Thurgarton, like many Augustinian houses, was intimately concerned with local affairs ; and its inhabitants would have ample opportunity of contact with secular life.

The existing remains show that the Priory was planned on a dignified scale, and must have occupied a prominent place in the life

¹ Fine Roll. 14 Ed. III. 1340.

of the district. The three western bays and north-western tower of its great cruciform church still stand ; and from these, and the area once covered by the monastic buildings, we can form some idea of the beauty and spaciousness of Hilton's home.¹ The altar-stone of the high altar is original, and may well be that at which he celebrated. In the garden of the Priory House, scraps of thirteenth century sculpture strongly suggesting the influence of the Southwell school, and including part of a crucifix on which Hilton probably looked, are now incorporated in a rockery. As all visitors to Southwell Minster know, Gothic sculpture reached in this district its most perfect development ; and perhaps it is not merely fanciful to trace in Hilton's work—at once so "ghostly" and so "homely"—a reflection of that natural yet supernatural loveliness.

In the surrounding landscape, hardly changed since his time, we may still recover the natural features of his environment. The Priory lay on the slope of a hill above the little village ; a stream ran through the grounds. The undulating pastoral country, its soft contours, its

¹ The Augustinians seem to have had a high standard of architectural splendour. The sanctuary of Dorchester Abbey in Oxfordshire, built about 1350, shows what they were capable of in Hilton's time, and suggests the character of his aesthetic background.

chequer of fields and lanes—so peculiarly English in character—seem completely appropriate to the development of that gentle realism, that quiet intimacy and simplicity, which mark Hilton's teaching, with its perfect avoidance of forced contrast and exaggeration. So too his surroundings account for the genial understanding of ordinary men, the absence of otherworldliness, which are characteristic of his writings. We can hardly suppose that Thurgarton was a nest of mystics ; or that he found there those opportunities of complete solitude which drew Rolle to the hermit's life or Julian of Norwich to her anchoress' cell. The Priory, in close touch with the social life of the district, was a centre of many activities, and probably contained, like most Augustinian houses, a mixed population of practical and devotional souls ; for the Austin Canons, with a rule of life midway between those of the monk and the secular priest, performed a great variety of charitable and religious works, giving scope for many different vocations.

“ The road along which the Canons Regular walk in order to reach the Heavenly Jerusalem,” says an old writer, “ is the Rule of the Blessed Augustine. This rule is simple and easy, so that unlearned men and children can walk in it without stumbling. On the other hand it is deep and lofty, so that the wise and strong

can find in it matter for abundant and perfect contemplation. An elephant can swim in it, and a lamb can walk in it safely.''¹

When we remember that Hilton's contemporary Ruysbroeck, perhaps the greatest of all Christian contemplatives, lived under the Augustinian Rule; that Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, whose formative influence on mediaeval thought can scarcely be over-rated, were Augustinian Canons; and that we owe to followers of this Rule the foundation of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and the existence of the St. Bernard dog, it will be seen that it could indeed support many varying types of spirituality and service. In England, where fifty-four Augustinian houses were established between the Conquest and the death of Henry II, the Canons were chiefly devoted to preaching and pastoral work, and had a considerable reputation for scholarship. At least from 1325 onwards, they sent their students to the schools; and seem to have been among the earliest composers

¹ Given by J. W. Clark: Observances in use at the Augustinian Priory at Barnwell, Cambridge. The opening phrase at once reminds us of Hilton's description of the spiritual life as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Book II, cap. 21). Compare the last sentence with Jacopone da Todi, *Lauda* XL.

'Nante è la scrittura che omne studiante

Sí ce pò ben leggere e proficere enante;

Notace l'alifante e l'aino ce pò pedovare.

The source of the image is of course Augustinian.

of vernacular religious works.¹ The very moderate degree of scholarship which Hilton shows, the books to which he seems to have had access, and the nature of his work as an ascetic writer and director of souls, are all appropriate to an Austin Canon of a serious sort. Some of his brothers in religion, judging from the records of fourteenth century Chapters, took their vocation less earnestly ; combining it with a considerable degree of worldly enjoyment. Thus in 1334 it was necessary to forbid dancing and unseemly songs. Blue capes, tight hose, and fanciful shoes were also condemned, as unsuited to the religious life ; and the canons ordered to wear gaiters or jack-boots when they went abroad. In 1346 the Chapter was forced to deal with the passion for dogs—so often a difficulty in houses of religion—and prohibit the habit of feeding them in the refectory.²

These homely details must be taken into account if we would fully realize the average life in an Augustinian house in Hilton's time, and the probably mixed character of the sur-

¹ Thus the Austin Canon Richard Cricklade, who died in 1310, wrote homilies on the Gospels in English.

² *Quod canonici non habeant canes hora prandii coram se. Item quod abbates et priores dicti ordinis et ceteri canonici quicumque canes venaticos seu alios quoscumque in aulis aliisve locis quibuscumque saltem tempore prandii, cum per eos elemosina devastetur, retinere de cetero non presumant* (Chapter of Leicester, 1346).

roundings in which *The Scale of Perfection* was composed ; surroundings giving equal opportunity for a profound or superficial interpretation of the religious profession. We must suppose that his immediate environment, and his life as a director of souls, would bring him into touch with both extremes. Indeed, his work shows that he was familiar alike with the sins and follies of the average man and the most subtle and difficult problems of the contemplative life. Serious religious personalities, such as the "ghostly sister" for whom *The Scale of Perfection* was written, or the "great lord" whom he taught how to live a devout life in the world, flourished in fourteenth century England. The idea of sanctity as a practical goal of life was far more familiar then than now : those who heard the supernatural call heard it clearly, and responded with courage and simplicity to its difficult demands. On the other hand, a life which offered shelter from many of the risks and difficulties of the contemporary world, certainly attracted some who neither had nor desired "ghostly feelings."

There was also a third feature in Hilton's religious landscape. He wrote at a moment when theological controversies of the bitterest kind were poisoning the atmosphere, and persecution was about to begin. Wyclif, who was condemned in 1382, was his contemporary, and his many

caustic references to heretics, whom he equates with "cursed men" and specifically excludes from the operations of grace, prove their prominence in the ecclesiastical scene. The North Midland counties were indeed a chief theatre of the Lollard propaganda. An author or group of authors in the Nottingham district early put forward glossed Lollard translations of the Synoptic gospels and Pauline epistles, and unglossed versions of the Catholic epistles, all in the North Midland dialect.¹ By the time the second book of the "Scale" was written, the Wycliffite preachers in their russet gowns had spread over the whole countryside; and we get in the 26th Chapter a vivid portrait of them, as seen by orthodox eyes.

"They hold the highness of their own heart and unbuxomness to the laws of Holy Kirk, as it were perfect meekness to the Gospel and to the laws of God. They ween that the following of their own will were freedom of spirit and therefore . . . the words that they show by preaching resound all to backbiting and to striving, and to discord-making reproving of states and of persons; and yet they say that all this is charity and zeal of righteousness."

We may be sure that this picture was drawn from life, for Hilton had every opportunity of

¹ Deanesley : *The Lollard Bible*, p. 310.

first-hand acquaintance with his subject. In May 1388 the Prior of Thurgarton, in association with the Official of the Archdeacon of Nottingham, was appointed to summon and examine all suspected Lollards and commit them to prison till they disowned their heresies, and further to "search for, seize, and bring to the Council with all speed all books, schedules and quires containing the unsound doctrines and heresies of Master John Wyclif, Nicholas Hereford, John Aston and their followers, on information that many such books are frequently compiled and published, written both in English and Latin, and further to make proclamation prohibiting the maintenance of those opinions, or the keeping or writing or selling of those books under pain of imprisonment and forfeiture; and calling on all who have them to give them up."¹ It may well be that Hilton, as already a religious writer and teacher of some eminence, was one of those who assisted the Prior in the examination of these works. Their chief claim, that by the Lollard movement the Bible was given back to the people, from whom it had been withheld by "covetous clerks," must have been peculiarly displeasing to him. He belonged to an order specially addicted to Bible study; and

¹ Pat. Roll. II Ric. II pt. 2. m. 26*d.*, 23 May, 1388.

was himself the first English religious writer to recommend the reading of the Scriptures to the laity.¹ All his readers know how constantly he appeals to, and quotes from, the Bible ; always giving an English rendering of each Latin text, so that we obtain from him a number of vernacular passages already current in Wyclif's day. In this practice he continues and elaborates a method of teaching introduced by Rolle and his followers ; for the English mystics, with their almost exclusive interest in personal religion, were among the first to proclaim to lay folk the devotional value of the Bible. Their work is so saturated in its language and imagery, that without a close knowledge of Scripture it cannot fully be understood. It must be confessed that Hilton's Latin texts do not always agree with the Vulgate, or with the Breviary version of the Psalms, which he commonly employs. He seems either

¹ Cf. "The Treatise on Mixed Life" printed in Horstman, *Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, Vol. I, p. 264. A modernized version in Dalgairns' edition of the "Scale." This tract was probably written about 1370 and addressed to "a worldly lord." As to the Augustinian study of the Scriptures, we know from the Chronicle of Windesheim the extent in which the Augustinian novices at Zwolle practised this. Those who regard the Augustinian Canon Thomas à Kempis as the author of the *Imitation* may remember that this book, with over 1000 direct Biblical references, sets a standard of knowledge before which many "Bible Christians" would quail.

to have quoted from memory, or used one of the many defective manuscripts of which St. Thomas Aquinas had complained a century before ; and his peculiar methods of interpretation sometimes react on his English renderings. By the end of the fourteenth century as many inaccurate Bibles were in circulation in the orthodox as in the heretical camp, and Wyclif was probably right in suggesting to the unfriendly critic of his own version that " he examine truly his Latin Bible, for no doubt he shall find full many Bibles in Latin full false if he look." ¹

Another peculiarity likely to increase Hilton's dislike of the Lollards, was the use made by them of the writings of the vernacular mystics, and especially of Richard Rolle. They claimed to find in Rolle's teaching support for their own doctrine of religious liberty ; and even gave out an interpolated form of his Commentary on the Psalter, in order to cover their heresies with the growing authority of his name. This brought some discredit on mystical doctrines, and even caused the movement for Rolle's canonization to be dropped. To this aspect of Lollard propaganda we probably owe—at least in part—Hilton's constant vigorous repudiation of religious licence, and the care with which he expresses those distinctions between

¹ *Prologue of the Wyclif Bible.*

external religious practice and inward reality which are fundamental for the mystic. His determined and unswerving orthodoxy sometimes lands him in positions quaintly inconsistent with the spiritual insight which distinguishes his greatest passages. Thus he accepts a purely magical view of baptism, which allows him to describe an unbaptized baby as "an image of the fiend and brand of hell," and insist that at death it will go to eternal torment whilst a newly-baptized Jew goes straight to heaven. He is also obliged to qualify his own patent conviction that confession of venial sin is unnecessary to "chosen souls," and that fasting and other austerities are of secondary importance, by a careful reminder that the commands of Holy Church are always right and always to be obeyed (Bk. II, caps. 6, 7, 39).

If we turn to the spiritual and intellectual influences which Hilton's writings reveal, we find that his mental outlook is dominated by the group of religious writers who inspired all the great fourteenth century mystics. He is saturated in the Bible, especially the Psalms and St. Paul. He quotes frequently from St. Augustine, who is certainly, outside the Scriptures, the principal source of his images and ideas ; and less often from St. Gregory. Perhaps the useful books of extracts found in most conventual libraries provided all he needed to know

of this great doctor. He was familiar with the generalities of scholastic theology, and as regards his mystical teaching further depends on St. Bernard and St. Bonaventura ; above all, on the great Augustinian Richard of St. Victor, whose genius has affected every spiritual writer of the later Middle Ages. From him Hilton, like the rest of the English school, takes his psychology *en bloc*.

These borrowings are mostly unacknowledged, and many probably remain unidentified ; for the mystics are among the greatest plagiarists of literature, and take freely from one another the forms in which their own realizations of Eternity are expressed. Thus the close parallels which we find in Hilton, not only to the English mystics, but also to Ruysbroeck, Jacopone da Todi, and other of his continental predecessors and contemporaries, point back to a common, and most frequently an Augustinian source. These writers are all deeply indebted to St. Augustine's great mystical passages, and use again and again his most vivid epigrams and images. They all base their ethics on his conception of virtue as an ordering of love ;¹ and hold, as Hilton shortly puts it, that a man is "nought else but his thoughts and his loves" ("Scale," Bk. I, cap. 88). The pithy saying "As mickle as thou lovest God and thine even-christian,

¹ *De Civitate Dei* XV, 22.

so mickle is thy soul '' (loc. cit.) at once reminds us of Jacopone's

'' Dio non alberga en core stretto,
tant'è grande quant' hai affetto,
povertate ha sì gran petto,
che ci alberga deitate '' (Lauda LX);

and the lovely phrase '' He it is that desireth in thee, and He it is that is desired '' (Bk. II, cap. 24) of the same great poet's

'' Amor, tu se' quel ama
donde lo cor te ama '' (Lauda LXXXI).

The *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Areopagite is another easily recognized source of the family resemblances among the mediaeval mystics. From him, of course, come Hilton's descriptions of our experience of God as a '' light-some darkness,'' and ''rich nought''; paradoxical efforts to express the inexpressible which never fail in their appeal to the contemplative soul.

Sometimes, by a significant addition of his own, he gives to these borrowings a new and deeper loveliness. Thus we have in Meister Eckhart the austere Dionysian saying '' He alone hath true spiritual poverty who wills nothing, knows nothing, desires nothing.'' Hilton, adopting this, adds ''*but* the love of Jhesu '' ; and at once the bleak emptiness is suffused with a spiritual light.

It would be a mistake, in spite of these many parallels with their evidence of reading, to consider him a learned man. The "Scale" requires, on the literary side, no more than the ordinary stock-in-trade of the religious writer and preacher of his day ; and the quaint error in Book I, cap. 4 suggests that even his knowledge of Latin may have been of the most superficial kind. In the history of English mysticism he must rank, if not as an immediate disciple of Richard Rolle, at least as an offshoot of his school. He shows a close knowledge of Rolle's works and doctrine, sometimes adopting his very words—again, without acknowledgment ; has read, and been strongly influenced by, that jewel of English mysticism *The Cloud of Unknowing* ; and may owe his obvious though not deep acquaintance with the mystical teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite to the same writer's *Dionise Hid Divinite*. The eager and almost unqualified recommendation of imageless contemplation which we find in the early version of Book I of the "Scale," suggests that at the time it was written he was deeply impressed by the type of spirituality which these works introduced into English devotional literature. But drawing inspiration, as he certainly does, from both these sources, and weaving together in one firm yet lovely fabric those transcendental and personal aspects

of communion with reality which together make the full mystical experience, he differs much in temperament from his two great predecessors. The wit, the biting precision, the philosophic outlook of the writer of the "Cloud" are absent here ; so too are the almost excessive emotionalism, the individualistic temper, the artistic and musical fervour of Rolle.

Rolle never reasons ; a natural poet, he acts and writes under the impulsion of feeling. Hilton, though often discursive, can reason closely if not always rightly. In him an exquisite soul is united to a logical mind. Rolle is constantly subjective, and tells us almost without reticence his most intimate spiritual experiences. He said well of himself that his ideal was the nightingale, that "little bird" which "for love of its lover longs, and longing it sings, and singing it longs in sweetness and heat. . . . O good Jhesu ! my thought Thou has bound in love of Thy Name, and now I *cannot* but sing it ! " Hilton, though the inexpressible happiness of personal contact shines behind his more reserved utterances, and gives them a beauty and a tenderness of which we cannot mistake the source, meekly disclaims any first-hand acquaintance with the heights of the contemplative life ; denying that "I have it in feeling and in working as I have it in saying" (Bk. I, cap. 93). The words with

which he ends his little treatise on *The Song of Angels*—words which every amateur mystic might well inscribe on his heart—define his religious attitude ; an attitude distinguished by restraint, humility, and illuminated common-sense. “ Lo, I have told thee in this matter a little as me thinketh ; not affirming that this sufficeth, nor that this is the soothfastness in this matter. But if thou think it otherwise, or else any other man savour by grace the contrary thereto, I leave this saying and give stead to him. *It sufficeth to me for to live in truth principally, and not in feeling.*” ¹

Much of Hilton’s work, both Latin and English, still remains in manuscript ; and in default of any critical monograph, no general discussion of it is possible here. A careful examination of the many collections of mediaeval religious pieces would probably add considerably to its bulk. Sermons ascribed to him and written in his style, and a translation of a treatise on “ The Tokens and Workings of Love,” by Louis de Fontibus, which is probably his, are found bound up with manuscripts of the “ Scale.” *The Song of Angels* and *The Treatise on Mixed Life* may be accepted as unquestionably authentic.

Nevertheless he is for us at present a man of

¹ *The Song of Angels*, printed by E. Gardner in *The Cell of Self-Knowledge*, p. 73. Also in Horstman, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 175.

one book, and in it we must seek him. As we become familiar with this book there gradually grows up in us the sense of contact with a soul of great depth and sweetness, at once shrewd and humble, ardent and practical : a religious realist of the noblest kind. Though he did not entirely escape the harsh side of mediaeval orthodoxy, this hardly impaired the wise and kindly tolerance of his general outlook. He could see our common human nature with all its weakness, silliness, tortuous self-deception and ingrained egotism ; yet without losing sight of its innate capacity for God. His vocation as his writings reveal it—whilst drawing its strength from the intimate joy and profound realism of his own inner life—was far less that of contemplative, than of director of souls. For this work he shows positive genius. His pupils seem to have been of many different types. The three English works that can be ascribed to him with certainty were respectively addressed to an anchoress, a fellow religious, and a “worldly lord.” For each he has a different manner of approach, a different quality of demand : entering into the special difficulties of each career and the opportunities of self-deception presented by it. The religious is not to persuade himself that he sees heavenly things before “his eye is made ghostly by grace.”¹

¹ *The Song of Angels*, loc. cit. p. 69.

The worldly lord must not shirk his duty to children, servants or tenants in order to luxuriate in devout meditations. The sort of spirituality which neglects practical tasks and immerses itself in prayer is bluntly described as “tending God’s Head and neglecting His Feet.”¹ Equally objectionable is the tendency to yield to “sloth, idleness, and vain rest, under colour of contemplation.”² The anchoress must not snub visitors who come to her cell at an inconvenient time ; nor must she fancy herself a holy woman, and try to teach the priest who comes to teach her (“Scale,” Bk. I, cap. 83).

With all his pupils, Hilton perpetually insists on essentials ; and chiefly on meekness and charity, the twin stars of the contemplative life. He checks the natural desire of ardent beginners for special experiences and consolations, forestalls religious formalism, reminding them that even the most respected devotions are means not ends and “may be left when occasion serveth,” and adopts a sane and almost modern attitude in respect of physical austerities. Practical counsels, showing keen insight into human need and weakness, abound in him ; and indeed

¹ *The Treatise on Mixed Life*, Horstman, loc. cit. This image, on which Hilton bases an elaborated disquisition, is taken from St. Augustine’s Commentary on 1st Epistle of St. John.

² Loc. cit.

he has most often been praised for his sanctified common sense. But beyond, around and within this kindly prudence of the skilled director, inspiring all his teaching and bathing his pages in its mysterious light, is the radiant atmosphere of that "ghostly heaven" within which the Christian mystic enjoys the "lovely dalliances of privy speech" which are the source of his strength and joy. In the last few chapters of the "Scale," perhaps the most wonderful descriptions of Christo-centric contemplation that exist, we cannot doubt that Hilton tells us something of his own secret. He has little to say or hint of ecstasies and raptures, and steadily discounts—as all great mystics have done—the importance too often attached to abnormal experiences. Contemplation for him, as for St. Bernard, is simply the communion of love.

*Frequens illi visitatio cum homine interno, dulcis sermocinatio, grata consolatio, multa pax, familiaritas stupenda nimis.*¹ As we read, he almost persuades us that we too "perceive in rest and in love the sweet sound of that ghostly voice," and share his awareness of that homely yet unearthly Presence. Careful comparison of his works, and especially of the earlier and later versions of *The Scale of Perfection* show, I think, that this experience underwent in him a considerable development. In the early form of

¹ *De Imitatione Christi*, Lib. II, cap. i.

Book I of the "Scale," which was first circulated as a complete work, and also in *The Song of Angels*, there is a marked tendency to that more or less dim yet rich theocentric contemplation which is characteristic of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and largely derived from Dionysius the Areopagite. We can believe that these writings would deeply impress a man of Hilton's temperament when first he met them. The changes made in the later version of the "Scale" qualify and balance this theocentricism by additional references to the Holy Name, and to the Humanity of Christ. We feel throughout a warmer, more intimately Christo-centric tone. In Book II, probably written some time after Book I, this movement towards a simpler, more ardently personal mysticism is complete. We there get one of the most beautiful expressions in our literature of that peculiarly English devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus which appears in the earliest of our vernacular religious writings, *A Talking of the Love of God*,¹ and illuminates all the works of Rolle and his school. In this worship of the Holy Name, with its penetrating intimacy, its spiritual realism, its poetic charm, we have perhaps the most precious treasure of mediaeval religion. It offers the humblest Christian "the end of a golden string." Hilton shows us what

¹ Printed in Horstman, op. cit. Vol. II, p. 345.

happens to the Saints who "wind it into a ball." This experience, so actual yet elusive, rich yet homely, giving to the soul new capacity for heroism and joy, is not to be confused with the religious amorism to which hurried psychologists often reduce it. It is central to Christianity, showing an unbroken line of descent from St. Paul and the Fourth Evangelist to our own day ; and has behind it a profound spiritual philosophy, which will be understood by those who have read the English mystics with sympathy and care.

It is hardly necessary to refer to the theory, now generally discredited, that Hilton was the author of *The Imitation of Christ*. He is perhaps the worst, as Thomas à Kempis is certainly the best, candidate for this great privilege. Though at times the devotional angle of the "Imitation" approaches that of the "Scale," no sensitive reader can fail to be struck by the difference of temperament and experience underlying the two books ; and it is unlikely that comparison with Hilton's still unedited Latin works will reverse this judgment. He writes as a man in touch with practical affairs : knowing something of domestic problems and duties, and of country life. The author of the "Imitation" is a cloistered religious ; all his human problems are those of the monastic career. Both men, it is true, are saturated in the Bible, and depend much on St. Augustine and St. Bernard ;

both are inspired by passionate Christo-centric feeling. But as the writer of the "Imitation" could never have carried through Hilton's long and often tedious discussion of the "two images" in man, and from first to last shows no acquaintance with Rolle or *The Cloud of Unknowing*; so Hilton, on his part, seems alien in feeling from those marvellous dialogues through which so much of the mysterious wisdom of the "Imitation" is expressed. Its intense other-worldliness, its doctrine of suffering, are not echoed by him: nor does he give us in his authentic works any reason for supposing that the ardent devotion to the Eucharist which inspires Book IV was prominent in his own mystical life. Even if we refuse to attribute the "Imitation" to à Kempis, we are I think bound on the evidence to give it a fifteenth century date; and this would of course make Hilton's authorship impossible. When the "Imitation" was first circulated in England, towards the middle of the fifteenth century, *The Scale of Perfection* was the most widely read of English devotional works; and an uncritical admiration which had already forgotten Hilton's date and the name of his order, easily ascribed to him a book which soon rivalled his own in popularity and was in apparent harmony with much of his teaching. The legend lingered, and was revived during the eighteenth century; but must now be regarded as

little more than a “curiosity of literature.” Those who support the authorship of à Kempis may like to remember that, on this theory, we owe to the *Canons Regular* of St. Augustine the two greatest mediaeval guide books to the spiritual life.

II

THE SCALE OF PERFECTION

The Scale of Perfection, though commonly described as a mystical classic, is really—like many of the works of the mystics—concerned as much with the moral and ascetic as it is with the contemplative life. It is not a storehouse of esoteric wisdom, but a way-book for the soul travelling in spirit to Jerusalem, “the which betokeneth contemplation in the perfect love of God”; and has more to tell us of the difficulties of the road than of the consummation at the journey’s end.¹ Thus it reminds us of the fact, too often forgotten, that the mystical life is not some abnormal condition of consciousness, the prerogative of a few elect spirits, sharply divided from the experiences and duties of “ordinary

¹ Doubtless the conception of the soul’s ascent to Jerusalem comes from the famous passage in St. Augustine’s *Confessions* (Bk. XIII, cap. 9). Cf. title page of this volume.

piety.” It is rather, as understood by the great mystics, the perfect flowering of that interior life of love and prayer to which in a greater or less degree every real Christian is called ; and which it is the business of external religion to support and preserve. An unbroken “ ladder ” goes all the way from our common human nature to the perfect or supernatural life in God of the transfigured soul. “ But from the lowest to the highest,” says Hilton, “ may not a soul suddenly start, no more than a man that will climb upon an high ladder and setteth his foot upon the lowest stave may at the next fly up to the highest ; but him behoveth go by process one after another, till he may come to the overest ” (Bk. II, cap. 17).

This image of a spiritual ladder, no doubt suggested by Jacob’s dream, is a favourite with the mystics. It had been used by St. John Climacus and by St. Benedict, and was a commonplace of religious symbolism in Hilton’s time.¹ Its suggestion of necessary effort and perseverance, of the soul’s achievement of perfection as a gradual ascent, doubly conditioned by God’s grace and man’s willed and often arduous striving, were congenial to a time in our religious history when the idea of sanctity as a veritable state of being, slowly and hardly attained, was well understood.

¹ Cf. Dante :

Vid’io uno scaleo eretto in suso

Tanto, che nol seguiva la mia luce.” *Par.* XXI, 29.

It is useful to us still, as a reminder that the life of the spirit—involving as it does the sublimation of every human impulse and desire—is fully won only by long and patient effort; not suddenly given to the eager neophyte who expresses his willingness to receive it. Hilton, however, using this conventional symbol for his title, and assuming that conception of the spiritual life for which it stands, deals chiefly under another metaphor with the difficulties and consolations which his “ghostly sister” the anchoress for whom he writes will encounter on her upward climb. The fundamental idea of the book is the conception—frequent in mediaeval thought—of man’s soul as the image of God, defaced by sin, which has impressed on it another pattern or “dark image.” The object of the spiritual life is the restoration of the soul to its proper status, by a re-making or reformation which shall obliterate the false or dark image and restore the reality—the blurred innocence and beauty of the child of God. Such “reforming in faith and in feeling,” as Hilton calls it, forms the spiritual plot of *The Divine Comedy*; a work in which we find dramatized many of the essential ideas of the “Scale.” There too a hard, gradual, and voluntary reformation and ascent brings the desirous self slowly back to the “earthly Paradise” of ideal human nature; and prepares it for that degree of the vision of God which it is able to

receive. Often the parallels are close. Thus Dante, at the end of his purification, passes through Lethe and enters Paradise cleansed from remorse and all memory of sin. Hilton, too, brings the soul to that "second state of meekness" which involves an utter self-oblivion. Looking not at its own imperfection, but at Christ's perfection, it forgets itself ; and, living towards His innocence, ceases to grieve for sin.

The soul's "reforming" or spiritualization is a process which has, in Hilton's doctrine, two manners or degrees. It may either be in faith, or in feeling. Every believing and practising Christian is reformed in faith, even though he knows it not. This state is assured to him by his membership of the Church, and is sufficient for salvation. But beyond this is a level of ghostly experience to which some are called even in this present world, and which none who are called may refuse. Those who have chosen, or been chosen by, the spiritual life—that "sovereign and subtle craft"—with all its rigours, develop bit by bit a new and deeper consciousness, a new capacity for spiritual things. They become, gradually but surely, "reformed in feeling" (Bk. II, caps. 15, 16). Their "ghostly eye" is opened, and gazes more or less dimly yet in "ghostly savour and heavenly delight" upon the spiritual world. Such, in its various forms and degrees, is the interior or contemplative life ; a life by no means

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demanding a complete abstraction from surface interests, but often supporting in hiddenness exacting careers of action and service.

It is for those who crave for this deeper consciousness of reality, and feel this impulse to a complete consecration, that Hilton writes. He addressed himself, it is true, to a recluse, enclosed like her contemporary Julian of Norwich in an anchoress' cell and dedicated to the life of prayer. Yet the gentleness and moderation of his counsels, their psychological exactitude, their steady repudiation of all excesses and insistence on organic growth, fit them for all who, living in the world, there seek to develop the deeper levels of the soul's life. His doctrine of spiritual renovation is, in theological language, a doctrine of grace. The "reforming of the image" is effected, not by man, but by the Divine power. God "is free and giveth Himself" (Bk. II, cap. 20); He "is all and He doth all, if thou might see Him" (Bk. II, cap. 24). We cannot evoke, predict, or limit the supernatural generosity. Nevertheless, from the view-point of human consciousness the supernatural action demands, and indeed requires—as the scholastics had already taught—man's voluntary response (Bk. II, cap. 28); only in the presence of his whole-hearted surrender and effort will it produce its full effect. This is a conviction most necessary to the mystic, if he is to be saved from the dangers of quietism.

Man's essential dispositions are described as meekness, trust, and a resolute will ; and perhaps no psychologist could express more precisely the qualities necessary to the transformation and up-building of character. The primary importance of will and desire are constantly emphasized. "We are nothing else but wills," said St. Augustine ; and this bracing statement never seems far from Hilton's mind. The soul is felt to be an energy. It is "as great as its love" (Bk. I, cap. 88) ; its direction and intention show best its fundamental quality, for "love" is here no sentimental preference, but the name of the willed tendency of the spirit. Here of course the "Scale" is in harmony with all the great text books of the interior life ; which insist again and again, as frankly as any modern psychologist, that desire is and does all, and hence that "a good will is the substance of all perfection." As the Christian mystic in his contemplations should hold the balance between the unconditioned and the incarnate revelations of God to the soul, so in his work he should hold the balance between willed and purposive action, and that deliberate meek passivity in which he is surrendered to the mysterious operations of grace.

Another point in which Hilton reveals his sanity and deep sense of spiritual realism, is the small value which he attaches to these abnormal experiences which haunt the practice of mystical

religion, and are so often mistaken for its substance. These experiences seem to have been far more common, because more eagerly desired, in the Middle Ages than at the present day. The religious emotionalism of Rolle, his frank description of the psycho-physical states which he called "heat, sweetness, and song,"¹ evidently produced in his followers a tendency to similar automatisms. Against this identification of inward grace with bodily feelings the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* had protested with wit and vigour; and Hilton repeats these warnings, perpetually reminding his pupil that these and all other physical sensations are never to be mistaken for "ghostly feeling." Even when best and most true they are only like the fire and tongues of Pentecost; outward tokens of an "inly grace" (Bk. II, cap. 31). Excessive fervour, indeed, is often a sign of spiritual weakness and immaturity (Bk. II, cap. 29): another doctrine in which we can trace the bracing influence of the "Cloud." The real man or woman of prayer has reached the deeper and quieter levels of intercourse and love. So crude were the popular ideas of spiritual experience, that it was even necessary to insist that the Fire of Love—that favourite image of the mystics—was not a material conflagration (Bk. I, cap. 26), and that those who spoke of God

¹ Cf. Rolle : *The Fire of Love*, Book I, cap. 15.

as being within the soul did not mean that He dwelt there "like a kernel in a nut" (Bk. II, cap. 33). Such language was approximate. No symbol or image, however holy, could ever be representative of supersensual things.

For Hilton, as for all the great mystics, the clarification and expansion of the soul's life, or "reforming of the image," is organic. It comes by way of growth, not of cataclysm; and the awakening and establishment of man's latent spiritual consciousness is gradual too. To have it, we must believe in and desire it—"Faith comes before feeling." At first, the nascent feeling will be experienced in flashes; in some short and seldom, in others long and clear (Bk. II, cap. 32). It only becomes "homely" with the complete "reforming" of the soul; when virtuous impulses and desires are habitual to it, and the early stage of conflict left behind. The aim of spiritual education is the achievement of this stability; replacing the "false image" of sin—which Hilton in characteristic mystical fashion defines as a mere negation of reality, a lack of God—by the positive image of Christ shining in the cleansed mirror of the soul. The sovereign qualities which affect this purification are meekness and charity; those "full true sisters," which never can or should be parted one from another (Bk. I, cap. 77). By "meekness,"

mere abjection is not meant ; but rather "soothfastness" or seeing things as they are. Pride, self-occupation, distorts our vision. The simple, unselfish glance of the truly meek alone perceives reality ; and reality, for the mystics, is always and only God. When the soul thus faces the Real, it sees the absurdity of thinking that its minute efforts and good works are "somewhat" (Bk. II, cap. 20) ; and by this positive vision of Perfection—incomparably more humbling than the most diligent curry-combing of its own teeming imperfections—it is stirred to a deeper and ever more surrendered love.

The soul in whom this love and meekness really dwell, possesses the essentials of the mystical life, and a key by which to solve its problems. It knows itself and its governing desire ; it is a pilgrim "set on the road to Jerusalem." Its one duty henceforth is to stick to the road and press forward ; maintaining its inward liberty, never confusing religious means and customs with religious ends (Bk. II, cap. 19). The spiritual life is progressive, and customs appropriate to its apprentices may be outgrown. Moreover a wholesome variety is as needful to soul as to body ; "ghostly works" should be diverse and sometimes changed. Outward devotions, however excellent, are never to become fetters ; they

may be left when it seems good so to do (Bk. II, cap. 32). Yet this clear sense of the secondary character of external religion does not blur Hilton's vision of its value and indeed necessity ; as evoking, safeguarding, keeping-up the spiritual in man. Thus he reminds his pupil that in meditation, consideration of the outward image will often produce that ghostly state which is alone fruitful for the soul.

So too in regard to penance and bodily austerities, his eye is ever fixed not on the outward act but on the inward grace. The lover of Christ must avoid mere rigidity, and act with freedom and common sense ; eating that which least distracts her and is "good for her bodily complexion," whether meat, fish, or even "bread and ale" (Bk. II, cap. 39). She must remember that ill-health is not to be desired ; sickness in stomach "hinders the knowing and beholding of ghostly things" (Bk. I, cap. 75). Her rule is to be kept faithfully but with a reasonable suppleness. The duty of courtesy, obligatory on all the servants of a God Who is "courteous and homely" to men, may sometimes oblige her to leave meditation in order to "profit her even-christian" by conversation at the window of her cell (Bk. I, cap. 83). She must acquiesce promptly and graciously, and so doing will lose nothing ;

but will find God in her visitor "though in another manner," provided the conversation is suitable and does not descend to worldly vanities. This restriction of subject will tend to eliminate merely frivolous callers. The directions for getting rid of those who stay too long are much to the point; and reveal a real if minor difficulty of the anchorite's career.

In his instructions on that drastic re-making of character which forms the lower stages of the spiritual ladder, Hilton shows himself as plainly aware as any modern psychologist of the outstanding features of our psychic life; the strength of impulse, the self-deceiving tendency to rationalization, the need for deep analysis of motive. Those uprushes from the lower centres which so deeply distress the religious consciousness, were treated by him in a bracing and truly scientific spirit (Bk. I, cap. 38). He insisted that they were "harmless as fleas," and by no means to be violently repressed, but quietly ignored. The self is not to force itself too much, but "slyly draw its desire" to ghostly things: a striking anticipation of that which is now known as the law of "reversed effort." What most helps man to spiritualize his nature, is attending to God and not to himself; ever "styng up his heart by desire"—keeping his will steadily set towards the "assigned end" and his soul open

to its beneficent suggestions (Bk. I, 38 and 91). This doctrine, of which we are now learning the value in other departments of life, at once sanctions and explains contemplative practices ; which are, at bottom, designed to concentrate our whole will and feeling—the drift and inclination of conscious and subconscious mind—on the goal of the spiritual quest, and so bring to vividness man's dim sense of, and longing for, Eternal Life. This fact Hilton implicitly understood ; though obliged to express it in language more beautiful and suggestive than that which we are privileged to use.

Such a lifting up into God of our intention and love he regarded as the essence of prayer. His account of prayer is both spiritual and psychological. Almost ignoring the prayer of petition, he dwells much on its subjective effects. Though we do not get from him the systematic account of its "degrees" loved by many ascetic writers—for indeed his whole method is discursive rather than orderly—he knows these degrees in practice, and describes them with a homely vividness. We recognize the prayer of aspiration "like a sparkle springing out of a firebrand" (Bk. II, cap. 42)—a phrase borrowed from *The Cloud of Unknowing*—and in the same chapter get a singularly beautiful description of the so-called "prayer

of simplicity," and its authority for those who use it. He also knows the state of purifying obscurity which St. John of the Cross called the "night of the senses"; that painful transition from images to pure "ghostliness" which introduces the soul to the "prayer of quiet" (Bk. II, cap. 24).

But on the contemplative and devotional side, the chief glory of the "Scale" and clue to its whole drift and meaning is to be found, not in its writer's knowledge of detail, his un-failing fund of skilled advice to pilgrim souls; rather in his lofty yet homely apprehension of the supernal end to which their journey leads. That end he calls "Jerusalem, the City of Peace"; that is to say "the perfect love of God, set in the hill of contemplation" (Bk. II. cap. 25). Here it is that he strikes so firmly the note which our fussy modern spirituality often lacks: for the measurement of the City, he says, is made up of two factors, "the perfection of a man's work, *and* a little touching of contemplation." It demands both perfect service and adoring vision: one without the other is useless to us—the measurement of Reality will not come right. When he comes to tell us of that second factor, which "passeth the deservings of all the workings of man," his words are so simple that we are often in danger of supposing them to carry all their meaning

on the surface. Only an experience as profound as his own of that "Love Unformed which is giver and gift" could teach us to appreciate their full significance.

III

MANUSCRIPTS

A large number of manuscripts of *The Scale of Perfection*, mostly dating from the fifteenth century, are still in existence. Many of these contain Book I only; which was apparently first put forward by Hilton himself as a complete work, and frequently reproduced alone. In the absence of any critical work on the manuscripts, no definite conclusions can be stated: and anything here said is only based on the limited material used for the purposes of the present edition.

From the ten manuscripts which I have examined, it seems possible to draw the following inferences.

(A) Book I was originally a complete work in itself, and was addressed to a female recluse. Not only is the ascription "Ghostly Sister" found more often than "Ghostly Brother"; but even where "Brother" has been substi-

tuted, various uncorrected phrases, plainly applicable only to women (e.g. Book I, cap. 62) show that the author had originally a woman reader in mind.

(B) At least two different versions of Book I were circulated, probably by Hilton himself. The earlier form, found among other places in the Vernon and Simeon MSS. both written towards the end of the fourteenth century, usually occurs in my experience as a separate work, but is sometimes followed by Book II. The chief peculiarities of this version are the comparatively small number of references to the Humanity of Christ, and the theocentric language of the more mystical passages. On the other hand the long and beautiful passage on the Holy Name of Jesus, sometimes found as an addition to cap. 44, appears to have formed part of it. It seems to me to have been written at the time when its author was strongly influenced by the type of mysticism which is represented by *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and by the doctrines of Dionysius the Areopagite. At a later period, perhaps because his own spiritual experience had deepened and taken a more warmly Christo-centric colour, perhaps because too great an encouragement of abstract contemplation of the Godhead was regarded as dangerous, Book I was revised and though its general plan was undisturbed, numerous

brief Christo-centric additions and expansions were made to it. In the present edition, the more important of these expansions have been placed in brackets, and their occurrence in other MSS. noted.

(C) Book II, probably written when Book I had already been some time in circulation, seems never to have been revised. The text is practically identical in all the MSS. which I have examined. It may date from the end of Hilton's life, and certainly shows signs of an increase in spiritual maturity and surety of touch. The references to heretics suggest that it was composed during the last quarter of the fourteenth century; probably after 1380, when Lollardy was rife in the Nottingham district and the Prior of Thurgarton was actively concerned in its suppression.

The following MSS. have been examined for the purposes of the present edition. The numbers are those under which they are quoted in the footnotes.

(1) *B. M. Harl.* 6579. Vellum. Early fifteenth century (Bks. I and II). This is the basis of my text, and has been followed throughout; except in the case of obvious errors and obscurities which have generally been corrected from (2) and (9). The opening words are "Gostely suster." Book I seems originally to have been copied from a MS. of the earlier type, but it

has been carefully revised by a later hand, all the additions and interpolations of the second version being added in the margin—sometimes with a caveat—or written-in over erasures. What we have here, then, is Hilton's full text in a state which allows us to distinguish the earlier from the later form. Originally a MS. belonging to the same group as (3) and (6) it has subsequently been corrected by a MS. of the group represented by (2), (8) and (9). On the fly leaf, in a later fifteenth century hand, are the words "Magister Walterus Hylton Canonicus de Thurgarton, qui fuit homo venerabilis sciencia et vite sanctitate, composuit hunc librum plenum catholica doctrina et edificacione." Another hand, of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, has written at the foot of f. 2 "Liber domus matris dei ordinis cartusiensis prope London." This MS. has therefore a special importance, as coming from the library of the London Charterhouse: for the Carthusians, the most learned of the contemplative orders, had always shown a peculiar devotion to Hilton's work, and may be expected to have taken some care to secure a correct text of the "Scale." It has also a unique interest for all who reverence Christian heroism, since it is probably the actual volume which nourished the spiritual life of the saintly John Houghton, Prior of the London Charterhouse;

who, with the Priors of Beauvale and Axholme, died so gladly for his convictions at Tyburn on May 4th, 1535, being the first victim of the persecutions under Henry VIII. All readers of Sir Thomas More's life remember how he looked out from his window in the Tower and saw the Carthusian Priors starting on their horrible journey to Tyburn, lashed to hurdles dragged at the horses' tail. The serenity and joy with which they accepted their sufferings nerved him to face with courage his own approaching trial and death.

(2) *B. M. Harl.* 2387. Vellum. Early fifteenth century (Bks. I and II). Book I agrees on the whole with the later versions. It contains most of the Christo-centric additions, but not the long passage on the Holy Name which is usually found in cap. 44. It begins "Gostly Brother." The end of the last chapter of Book II is missing. It concludes: "This is the voyce of Jhesu. Deo gracias." On f. 130b. is the inscription: "Istum librum legauit domina Margeria Pensax dudum inclusa apud Bysshoppisgate monasterio Sancti Saluatoris de Syon iuxta Shene." This MS. has been collated with (1) for the present edition.

(3) *B. M. Harl.* 6573. Vellum. 1st half fifteenth century (Bks. I and II). Begins "Gostly Brother or Suster" Imperfect: eight leaves missing. Book I agrees mainly with the first

version, omitting the Christo-centric additions and the passage in cap. 44 on the Holy Name.

(4) *B. M. Add. 22283, ff. 151b. to 160b.* The "Simeon MS." Vellum. Circ. 1380-1400 (Bk. I only). This, with the identical text of Book I in the Vernon MS. (MS. 10) is probably one of the earliest extant copies of the "Scale," and was almost certainly written in Hilton's lifetime. It is embedded in a huge collection of English religious pieces in prose and verse, several of which are attributed to him; and is preceded by Rolle's "Form of Parfyte living." It begins "Gostli brother or suster," and represents the earlier form of Book I without the Christo-centric phrases but with the passage on the Holy Name. The chapter divisions vary from those in MS. 1, but the titles attached to them are the same.

(5) *St. John's College, Cambridge, G 35.* Vellum. Fifteenth century (Bk. I only). Begins "Gostely ——" (erasure), but the feminine pronouns prove that it belongs to the "Sister Group." The text is substantially identical with the earlier version; but omits the passage on the Holy Name in cap. 44.

(6) *Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 368.* Parchment. Fifteenth century. Bks. I and II, separated by "A tretyes of the 7 pointes of trewe love and evir-lestyng wysdom, drawyn out of the book clepid Orologium Sapientiae." Begins "Gostely Systre." The whole content

of the MS. is ascribed to Hilton. Book I is substantially the earlier version, omitting the Christo-centric phrases ; but has some readings which agree with MS. 2 and not with MS. 7.

(7) *Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 1375.* Vellum. Fifteenth century (Bk. I only) : the earlier version, omitting the Christo-centric phrases. Begins "Gosteley Systre."

(8) *Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 354.* Vellum, dated 1499 (Bks. I and II). Well written in a large hand by "Benet quondam procuratorem in Carthusia de Schen super Tamisiam quod Grenehalgh eiusdem domus professus indigna manu sua." Agrees closely with MS. 2, and includes all the Christo-centric and other passages which have been interpolated in MS. 1. A colophon gives Hilton's *obit* as the Vigil of the *Assumption* 1395 ; but this is almost certainly a scribe's error for "Annunciation."

(9) *Lambeth MS. 472.* Vellum. Early fifteenth century (Bks. I and II). Begins "Gostely Sustre." Well written in a monastic hand. Book I is substantially the later version, but has many readings which vary from MSS. 1 and 2. The dialect also varies ; "Mikel" and "ilk" being replaced by "moche" and "eche." The MS. contains the "Treatise on Mixed Life," eight chapters on "The Tokens or Workings of Love," by Louis de Fontibus, turned into English

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by “Walter Hilton of Turbaton,” and three Sermons also attributed to Hilton.

(10) Bodleian, Vernon MS. Vellum. Circ. 1380–1400. Contains Book I in the earlier version, identical with that in B. M. Add. 22283 (Simeon M.S.) which is in essentials a copy of the Vernon M.S. Begins “Gostly brother or Suster.” The Christo-centric phrases are omitted.

IV

PRINTED EDITIONS

The Scale of Perfection was first printed in black letter by Wynkyn de Worde, London, 1494 ; by Julian Notary in 1507 ; and again, with the “Treatise on Mixed Life,” by Wynkyn de Worde in 1525 and 1533. The text from which these editions were taken has not been identified. In 1659 a new version appeared, based on Wynkyn de Worde, but replacing “antiquated words”—including many of Hilton’s most characteristic expressions—by seventeenth century paraphrases or conventional equivalents. The old chapter-divisions were cancelled, and the whole work was rearranged in three instead of two books. Hilton was described on the title page as “a Carthusian famous in the reign of Henry VI.” This edition,

which was reprinted in 1672 and 1679, emanated from those diligent students of mediaeval mysticism, the exiled English Benedictines of Douay and Cambrai. It was probably the work of Serenus de Cressy, the saintly pupil of Augustine Baker, and editor of his master's voluminous treatises on the contemplative life;¹ who is familiar to all readers of *John Inglesant*.

It is to the enthusiasm of Serenus de Cressy that we also owe the first printed edition of the "Revelations" of Julian of Norwich.

The Scale of Perfection was evidently well known and much loved by the English Benedictines. It is frequently quoted, together with *The Cloud of Unknowing*, by Father Baker, whose notes upon it still exist in MS. at Downside Abbey. He inserts the whole of the parable of "The Pilgrim going to Jerusalem" (Bk. II, cap. 21) into the description of the nature and end of the contemplative life in *Holy Wisdom*; hence this section is familiar to many readers unacquainted with the rest of the book. A modernized edition based on the text of Wynkyn de Worde, by Dom Ephrem Guy, O.S.B., appeared in 1869; and in the following year Cressy's version was reprinted, with an introduction by Father Dalgairns. This was

¹ The Venerable Augustine Baker, 1575-1641. His chief ascetic writings, digested by Serenus de Cressy (1605-1674) were republished in 1908 under the title of *Holy Wisdom*.

re-issued in 1908, but is now out of print. All these editions also contain Hilton's *Treatise on Mixed Life*, which was first printed by Pinsen in 1506. *The Song of Angels*—the only other English work which can as yet be ascribed to him with certainty—was published by Henry Pepwell in 1521, and re-printed by Professor Edmund Gardner in *The Cell of Self-Knowledge* (New Mediaeval Library), in 1910.

V

The present edition of *The Scale of Perfection*, based on the London Charterhouse MS. (B. M. Harl. 6579), described above, and checked by B. M. MS. Harl. 2387, and Lambeth 472, is the first since that of Wynkyn de Worde to be taken directly from manuscript sources. It does not, however, profess to be a text for scholars, or to take the place of the much-needed critical edition of the "Scale." I have kept in view the needs of the general reader and the lover of Christian mysticism ; and have tried to restore to these a book which their ancestors rightly regarded as one of the greatest treasures of English religious literature. The spelling is therefore modernized ; and I have also cleared up a few hopelessly obscure readings, and

replaced entirely obsolete words—about forty in all—by their current equivalents.¹ In doing this, one or two of the alliterative passages—less frequent here than in *The Cloud of Unknowing*—have inevitably been lost. Such changes, however, are few ; and the reader may at least count on coming nearer in this book to Hilton's actual words and spirit, than has been possible since the black-letter editions ceased to be read.

The manuscript has been transcribed by Mr. David Inward ; to whom I am greatly indebted for the skill and care with which he has performed a very exacting task. My warmest thanks are also due to my old friend Mr. J. A. Herbert, Deputy Keeper of MSS. at the British Museum ; without whose constant kind help and encouragement, expert advice in the choice and dating of MSS. and many valuable suggestions, I could hardly have carried through this work ; to Mr. Hubert Stuart Moore, F.S.A., to whose researches in the Public Record Office I owe the hitherto unpublished information about Thurgarton and the position and activities of its Priors, which is incorporated in this introduction ; and

¹ The most important words so treated are : arette = account ; daungerous = aloof, estranged ; deren = hurt ; dwer = doubt ; flemed = cast out ; gropen = feel ; hope = expect or believe ; uggen = dread ; underminen = reprove ; wlatsome = abominable.

to Miss Hope Allen, the well known authority on Early English religious literature, from whom I have received much kind help on various points. I have also to thank Professor Jenkins, F.S.A., of the Archbishop's Library, Lambeth Palace, for permission to make use of the Lambeth MS. of the "Scale"; and Sir Geoffrey Butler, for his kindness in giving me special facilities for consulting the text preserved in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

EVELYN UNDERHILL.

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"The Ladder of Perfection," or in Latin "Scala perfectionis."*

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GLOSSARY

Again-stand	withstand
Anker	anchorite, anchoress
Assay	prove
Behight, behote	promised
Boisterous	.	.	.	.	.	rough, unskilful
Buxom	.	.	.	.	.	docile
Chafe	.	.	.	.	.	warm, excite
Charge	.	.	.	.	.	care, trouble
Costrel	.	.	.	.	.	barrel
Cunning	.	.	.	.	.	knowledge
Deem	.	.	.	.	.	judge
Disease	.	.	.	.	.	distress
Even-christian	.	.	.	.	.	neighbour
Fairhead	.	.	.	.	.	beauty
Flite	.	.	.	.	.	scold, quarrel, contend
Grisling	.	.	.	.	.	dreadful
Grouch	.	.	.	.	.	grumble
Ilk	.	.	.	.	.	every, each
Ken	.	.	.	.	.	teach
Kind	.	.	.	.	.	nature
Lewd	.	.	.	.	.	unlearned
Let	.	.	.	.	.	hinder
Liefer	.	.	.	.	.	more gladly
Meed	.	.	.	.	.	reward
Mickle	.	.	.	.	.	much
Murk	.	.	.	.	.	dark
Namely	.	.	.	.	.	specially
Oned	.	.	.	.	.	united
Onliness	.	.	.	.	.	solitude

Paid	.	.	.	.	.	.	satisfied
Privy	.	.	.	.	.	.	secret
Sad	.	.	.	.	.	.	serious
Sendal	.	.	.	.	.	.	silk veil
Sickerness	.	.	.	.	.	.	security
Soothfast	.	.	.	.	.	.	truthful
Standing	.	.	.	.	.	.	according to
Stead	.	.	.	.	.	.	place
Stirring	.	.	.	.	.	.	motion
Stying	.	.	.	.	.	.	ascending
Swink	.	.	.	.	.	.	to labour
Trowth	.	.	.	.	.	.	belief
Uncunning	.	.	.	.	.	.	ignorance
Unskilful	.	.	.	.	.	.	unreasonable, indiscreet
Wissing	.	.	.	.	.	.	directing, teaching
Worship	.	.	.	.	.	.	honour

**Magister Walterus Hylton Canonicus de Thurgarton, qui
fuit homo venerabilis sciencia et vite sanctitate : composuit
hunc librum plenum catholica doctrina et edificacione.**

Liber domus matris dei ordinis cartusiensis prope London.

BOOK I

INCIPIT LIBER PRIMUS.

CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter speaketh that the inner having of man should be like to the outer.

GHOSTLY sister in Jhesu Christ, I pray thee that in the calling which our Lord hath called thee to His service, thou hold thee paid and stand steadfastly therein ; travailling busily with all the mights of thy soul by grace of Jhesu Christ, for to fulfill in soothfastness of good living the state the which thou hast taken in likeness and in seeming. And as thou hast forsaken the world, as it were a dead man turned to our Lord bodily in sight of men ; right so that thine heart might be as it were dead to all earthly loves and dreads, turned wholly to our Lord Jhesu Christ. For wit thou well, a bodily turning to God without the heart following, is but a figure and a likeness of virtues and no soothfastness. Wherefore a wretched man or woman is he or she that leaveth all the inwardly keeping of himself, and shapeth him without-forth only a form and a likeness of

holiness, in habit, in speech and in bodily works ; beholding other men's deeds, and deeming their defaults ; weening himself to be aught, when he is right naught, and so beguileth himself. Do thou not so ; but turn thy heart with thy body principally to God, and shape thee within to His likeness by meekness and charity and other ghostly virtues, and then art thou truly turned to Him. I say not that thou so lightly on the first day mayest be turned to Him in thy soul by fullhead of virtues as thou mayest with thy body be closed in an house ; but that thou shouldst know that the cause of thy bodily enclosing is that thou mightest the better come to ghostly enclosing, and as thy body is enclosed from bodily conversation of men, right so that thine heart might be enclosed from fleshly loves and dreads of all earthly things. And that thou mightest the better come thereto, I shall tell thee in this little writing, as me thinketh.

CHAPTER TWO

Of active life, and the works thereof.

THOU shalt understand that there be in Holy Kirk two manner of lives, as Saint Gregory saith, in which Christian men shall be saved. One is called active, the other contemplative. Without one of these two may there no man be saved.

Active life lieth in love and charity showed outward by good bodily works ; in fulfilling of God's commandments and of the seven works of mercy, bodily and ghostly, to a man's even-christian. This life belongeth to all worldly men which have riches and plenty of worldly goods ; and also to all other which either have state, office, or cure over other men, and have goods for to spend, learned or lewd, temporal or spiritual, and generally all worldly men. They are bound to fulfill it upon their mights and their cunning, as reason and discretion asketh. And if he mickle have,¹ mickle do, and if he little have, less do ; and if he nought have, that he then have a good will. These be the works of active life, or

¹ MS. 3. These werkys of actyf lyf eyther bodily or gostly if he mikel have.

bodily, or ghostly. Also a part of active life lieth in great bodily deeds, which a man doth to himself, as great fasting, mickle waking, and other sharp penance-doing ; for to chastise the flesh with discretion for trespass before done, and by such penances for to refrain lusts and likings of it, and make it buxom and ready to the will of the Spirit. These works, though they be active, they help mickle and ordain a man in the beginning to come to contemplative life, if they be used by discretion.

CHAPTER THREE

Of contemplative life and the works thereof.

CONTEMPLATIVE life lieth in perfect love and charity felt inwardly by ghostly virtues, and by soothfast knowing and sight of God and ghostly things. This life belongeth specially to them which forsake for the love of God all worldly riches, worships and outward businesses and wholly give them body and soul up, their mights and their cunning, to service of God by ghostly occupation. Now then, since it is so that thy state asketh for to be contemplative, for that is the end and the intent of thine enclosing, that thou mightest more freely and entirely give thee to ghostly occupation : then behoveth thee for to be right busy night and day with travail of body and of spirit, for to come to that life as near as thou mightest, by such means as thou hopest were best unto thee.

Nevertheless, before I tell thee of the means, I shall tell thee first a little more of this life contemplative, that thou mightest somewhat see what it is, and then set it as a mark in the sight of thy soul whereto thou shalt draw in all thine occupation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Of the first part of contemplation.

CONTEMPLATIVE life hath three parts. The first lieth in knowing of God and of ghostly things, gotten by reason, by teaching of man, and by study in Holy Writ ; without ghostly affections and inly savour felt by the special gift of the Holy Ghost. This part have specially some lettered men, and great clerks which by long study and travail in Holy Writ come into this knowing, more or less, after the subtlety of kindly wit and continuance of study upon the general gift that God gives each man that hath use of reason. This knowing is good, and it may be called a part of contemplation in as mickle as it is a sight of soothfastness, and a knowing of ghostly things. Nevertheless it is but a figure and a shadow of very contemplation, for it hath not ghostly savour in God nor inwardly sweetness, which may no man feel, but he be in mickle charity. For that is the proper well of our Lord, to the which comes none alien. But this manner of knowing is common to good and to bad, for it may be had without charity. And

therefore it is not very contemplation, as oftentimes heretics, hypocrites, and fleshly living men have more such knowing than many true Christian men ; and yet have these men no charity. Of this manner knowing speaketh Saint Paul thus : *Si habuero omnem scientiam et noverim mysteria omnia, caritatem autem non habuero, nihil sum.* If I had full knowing of all thing, yea ! and knew all privities and I had no charity, I am right nought.¹ Nevertheless, if they that have this knowing keep them in meekness and charity,² and flee worldly and fleshly sins of their mights, it is to them a good way and a great disposing to very contemplation if they be true and pray devoutly after the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Other men that have this knowing and turn it into pride and vain glory of themselves, or into covetise and yearning of worldly states, worships and riches, not meekly taking it in praising of God, nor charitably spending it in the profit of their even-christians, some of them fall either into errors and heresies, or into other open sins by the which they scandalize themselves and all Holy Kirk. Of this knowing said Saint Paul thus : *Scientia inflat, caritas autem edificat,* Knowing alone lifteth up the heart into pride ; but meddle it with charity and then turneth it into

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

² MS. 2, " Charity such as they have."

8 THE SCALE OF PERFECTION

edification.¹ This knowing alone, it is but water, unsavoury and cold ; and therefore if they that have it would meekly offer it up to our Lord and pray Him of His grace, He should with His blessing turn the water into wine, as He did for the prayer of His mother at the feast of Architriclin.² That is for to say, he should turn the unsavoury knowing into wisdom, and the cold naked reason into ghostly light and burning love, by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

² John ii. 8, Dicit eis Jesus : Haurite nunc et ferte architriclino. This amusing error seems to shed some light on the extent of Hilton's education.

CHAPTER FIVE

Of the second part of contemplation.

THE second part of contemplation lieth principally in affection, without light of understanding of ghostly things ; and this is commonly of simple and unlettered men which give them wholly to devotion. And this is felt on this manner. When a man or a woman in meditation of God, by grace of the Holy Ghost feeleth fervour of love and ghostly sweetness, by the mind of His Passion or of any of His works in His manhood ; or he feels a great trust in the goodness and the mercy of God, for the forgiveness of his sins and for His great gifts of grace, or else he feeleth a dread in his affection with great reverence of the privy dooms of God which he seeth not, and of His rightwiseness ; or in prayer he feeleth the thought of his heart draw up from all earthly things, strained together with all the mights of it, upstyng into our Lord by fervent desire and with ghostly delight ; and nevertheless in that time he hath no open sight in understanding of ghostly things, nor of privities of Holy Writ in special, but only that him thinketh

for the time nothing liketh him so mickle as for to pray or think as he doth for savour, delight, and comfort, that he findeth therein ; and yet can he nought tell what it is, but he feeleth it well, for out of it spring many sweet tears, burning desires, and still mournings, which scour and cleanse the heart from all the filth of sin, and maketh it melt into wonderful sweetness of Jhesu Christ, buxom, supple and ready for to fulfill all God's will. In so mickle that him thinketh he maketh no care what becomes of himself so that God's will were fulfilled, with such many stirrings more than I can or may say. This feeling may not be had without great grace ; and who so hath it, for the time he is in charity. Which charity may not be lost, nor lessened, though the fervour of it pass away, but by a deadly sin ; and that is comfortable. This may be called the second part of contemplation.

CHAPTER SIX

Of the lower degree of the second part of contemplation.

NEVERTHELESS this part hath two degrees. The lower degree of this feeling, men which are active may have by grace when they be visited on our Lord, as mightily and as fervently as they that give them wholly to contemplative life and have this gift.¹ But this feeling in his fervour cometh not alway when a man would nor it lasteth not well long. It cometh and goeth as he will that giveth it. And therefore who so have it, meek himself and thank God, and keep it privy, but if it be to his confessor ² and hold it as long as he may with discretion. And when it is withdrawn dread not too mickle, but stand in faith and in a meek hope, with patient abiding till it come again. This is a little tasting of the sweetness of the love of God, of the which David saith thus in the psalter : *Gustate et videte quam suavis est Dominus.* Taste and see ye the sweetness of our Lord.³

¹ MSS. 2 and 3. But it lasteth nought so long.

² MS. 3, or to summe other wyse man.

³ Psa. xxxiv. 8.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Of the higher degree of the second part of contemplation.

BUT the higher degree of this part may not be had and holden, but of them which are in great rest of body and of soul ; the which by grace of Jhesu Christ and long travail bodily and ghostly feel a rest of heart and cleanness in conscience, so that them liketh nothing so mickle for to do, as to sit still in rest of body and for to alway pray to God and think on our Lord ; and for to think some time of the blessed name of Jhesu, which is comfortable and delectable to them,¹ that they by the mind of it, feel them fed in their affection. And not only that name, but all other manner of prayers, as the Paternoster, or the Ave, or hymns or psalms and other devout sayings of Holy Kirk are turned as it were into a ghostly mirth and sweet song, by the which they are comforted and strengthened against all sins, and mickle relieved of bodily disease. Of this degree speaketh Saint Paul thus : *Nolite inebriari vino sed implemini Spiritu sancto, loquentes vobismetipsis in hymnis et psalmis, et canticis*

¹ MS. 3, " that he be the menyng of that felen."

spiritualibus, cantantes et psallentes in cordibus vestris Domino. Be ye not drunken with wine, but be ye fulfilled of the Holy Ghost, saying to thyself in hymns and psalms and ghostly songs, singing and psalming in your heart to our Lord.¹ Whoso hath this grace, keep he himself in lowness, and look that he be aye desiring for to come to more knowing and feeling of God, in the third part of contemplation.

¹ Eph. v. 18, 19.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Of the third part of contemplation.

THE third part of contemplation, which is perfect as it may be here, lieth both in cognition and in affection : that is for to say, in knowing and in perfect loving of God. < And that is when a man's soul first is ¹ reformed by fullhead of virtues to the image of Jhesu ; and after when he is visited, is taken in from all earthly and fleshly affections, from vain thoughts and imaginings of all bodily creatures, and as it were mickle is ravished out of the bodily wits and then by the grace of the Holy Ghost is illumined for to see by understanding Soothfastness, which is God, and ghostly things, with a soft sweet burning love in Him, so perfectly that by ravishing of love the soul is oned for the time and conformed to the image of the Trinity. The beginning of this contemplation may be felt in this life, but the fullhead of it is kept unto the bliss of heaven. Of this oning and conforming to our Lord speaketh Saint Paul, thus : *Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est cum illo.* That is for to say who so by ravish-

¹ MS. 3, clensyd of synne and reformed.

ing of love is fastened to God, then God and a soul are not two but both one.¹ Not in flesh, but in one spirit. And soothly in this oning is the marriage made atwixt God and the soul, which shall never be broken.

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

CHAPTER NINE

Of the parting of the third part of contemplation from the second, and of praising thereof.

THAT other part may be called burning love in devotion ; but this is burning love in contemplation. That is lower ; this is the higher. That is the sweeter to the bodily feeling ; this is the sweeter to the ghostly feeling, for it is more inward, more ghostly, more worthy and more wonderful. For this is verily a tasting, so little as it is, and an earnest of the sight¹ of heavenly joy, not clearly, but half in murkness,² which shall be fulfilled and openly cleared in the bliss of heaven ; as Saint Paul saith : *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate ; tunc autem videbimus facie ad faciem.* We see now God by a mirror, as it were in a murkness, but in heaven shall we see openly face to face.³ This is the illumination of understanding in delights of loving, as David saith in psalter : *Et nox mea illuminatio mea in deliciis meis.* My night is my light in my

¹ MS. 2, as it were a swetness of heavenly joye.

² *Ibid.* in derkness and in lykness.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

delight.¹ The tother part is milk for children, this is whole meat for perfect men, which have assayed wits to choose good from evil ; as Saint Paul saith : *Perfectorum est solidus cibus qui habent sensus exercitados ad discretionem boni et mali.*²

The working and the full use of this gift may no man have, but if he be first reformed to the likeness of Jhesu by fullhead of virtues. Nor there may no man living in flesh deadly have it continually in its fullhead and in the overpassing, but by times when he is visited. And also I conceive of the writing of holy men, it is a well short time ; for soon after he falleth in a sobriety of bodily feeling. And all this work maketh charity. Thus, as I understand, saith Saint Paul of himself : *Sive excedimus, Deo, sive sobrii sumus, vobis; caritas Christi urget nos.* Whether we overpass our bodily wits to God in contemplation, or we are more sober to you by bodily feeling, the charity of Christ stirreth us.³ Of this part of contemplation and of conforming to God, speaketh Saint Paul openly thus : *Nos autem revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, transformamur in eandem imaginem, a claritate in claritatem tanquam a Domini Spiritu.* And this is thus mickle for to say, Saint Paul in the person of himself and of perfect men saith thus : We, first reformed by virtues, the face of our soul

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 11.

² Hebr. v. 14.

³ 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

uncovered by opening of the ghostly eye, behold as in a mirror heavenly joy, full shapen and oned to the image of our Lord, from clarity of faith into clarity of understanding or else from clarity of desire to clarity of blessed love.¹ And all this is wrought of the Spirit of our Lord in a man's soul, as Saint Paul saith. This part of contemplation God gives where that He will ; to learned and to lewd, men and women occupied in prelacy, and to solitary also ; but it is special, not common. And also though a man which is active have the gift of it by a special grace, nevertheless the full use of it² may no man have, but he be solitary and in life contemplative.

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

² MSS. 2 and 3. As I hope may no man.

CHAPTER TEN

How the showing to the bodily wits and the feeling of them may be both good and evil.

BY this that I have said mayst thou somewhat understand that visions or revelations of any manner spirit, in bodily appearing or in imagining, sleeping or waking, or else any other feeling in bodily wits made as it were ghostly ; either in¹ sounding of ear, or savouring in the mouth, or smelling at the nose, or else any sensible heat as it were fire glowing and warming the breast, or any other part of the body, or anything that may be felt by bodily wit, though it be never so comfortable and liking, are not very contemplation ; nor they are but simple and secondary though they be good, in regard of ghostly virtues, nor of this ghostly knowing and loving of God. For in virtues and in knowing of God with love is no deceit. But all such manner of feelings may be good, wrought by a good angel, and they may be deceivable, feigned by a wicked angel, when he transfigureth him into an angel of light. Wherefore since they may be both

¹ MS. 2. Semyng of syght or of sowndinge.

good and evil, it seemeth well they are not the best ; for wit thou well that the devil may when he hath leave, feign in bodily feeling the likeness of the same thing which a good angel may work. For as a good angel cometh with light, so can the devil, and so of the other wits. Whoso had felt both, he should know tell, which were good and which were evil ; but he that never felt neither, or else but the one, may lightly be deceived. They are like in the manner of feeling outward, but they are full diverse within ; and therefore they are not for to desire greatly, nor for to receive lightly, but if a soul might by spirit of discretion know the good from the evil, that he were not beguiled. As Saint John saith, *Nolite credere omni spiritui, sed probate si ex Deo sint.* Saint John biddeth us, we shall not believe every spirit, but we shall assay first whether he be of God or no.¹ Wherefore by one assay, I shall tell thee as me thinketh how thou shalt know the good from the evil in this manner of feeling.

¹ 1 John iv. 1.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

How thou shalt know when the showing to the bodily wits and the feeling of them are good or evil.

IF it be so, that thou see any manner of light or brightness with thy bodily eye, or in imagining, other than every man may see ; or if thou hear any merry sounding with thy bodily ear, or in thy mouth any sweet sudden savour, other than of kind, or any heat in thy breast as it were fire, or any manner delight in any part of thy body, or if a spirit bodily appeareth to thee as it were an angel, for to comfort thee and ken thee, or any such feeling which thou wost well that it cometh not of thyself nor of no bodily creature, be then wary in that time or soon after, and wisely behold the stirring of thine heart. If thou be stirred because of that liking that thou feelest, for to draw out thine heart from the mind and the beholding of Jhesu Christ and from ghostly occupation, as from prayer, and thinking of thyself and thy defaults, from the inward desire of virtues and of ghostly knowing and feeling of God, for to set the sight of thy heart and thine affection,

thy delight and thy rest principally therein, weening that it¹ should be a part of heavenly joy and of angel's bliss, and for that thee thinketh that thou shouldst neither pray nor think nought else, but all wholly tend thereto, for to keep it and delight thee therein, this feeling is suspect and of the enemy. And therefore, though it be never so liking and wonderful, refuse it and assent not thereto, for this is the sleight of the enemy. When he seeth a soul would entirely give him to ghostly occupation, he is wonderly wrath; for he hateth nothing more than for to see a soul in a body of sin feel verily the savour of ghostly knowing and the love of God, the which he without body lost wilfully, and therefore if he may not let him by open sins he would hinder him and beguile him by such vanity of bodily savours or sweetness in the wits, for to bring a soul into ghostly pride, and into a false security of himself, weening that he had thereby a feeling of heavenly joy, and that he were half in paradise for delight that he feeleth all about him, when he is near at hell gates; and so by pride and presumption he might fall in errors or in fantasies or in other bodily and ghostly mischiefs.

Nevertheless if it be so that this manner of feeling let not thine heart from ghostly occupation, but it maketh thee more devout and

¹ MSS. 2 and 3, that bodily felynge.

more fervent for to pray, it maketh thee more wise for to think ghostly thoughts, and though it be so that it astonish thee in the first beginning, nevertheless afterwards it turneth and quickeneth thine heart to more desire of virtues, increases thy love more both to God and to thine even-christian, also it maketh thee more meek in thine own sight ; by these tokens may thou know then that it is of God, made by the presence and the touching of the good angel, and that is of the goodness of God either in comfort of simple devout souls for to increase their trust and their desire to God, for to seek thereby the knowing and the love of God more perfectly for such a comfort, or else if they be perfect that feel such delight, it seems then that it is an earnest, and as it were a shadow of the glorifying of the body, which it shall have in the bliss of heaven. I wot not where there be any such man living in earth. This privilege had Marie Magdalene as it seemeth to my sight, in time when she was alone in the cave xxx winters, and ilk a day was born up with angels,¹ and was fed both body and soul by the presence of them. Thus we read in the history of her.

Of this manner assaying of working of spirits speaketh Saint John in his epistle thus, and teacheth us : *Omnis spiritus qui solvit Jhesum, hic non est ex Deo.* Ilk a spirit that looseth Jhesu

¹ MSS. 2 and 3, "into the eyr."

or unknitteth Him, he is not of God.¹ These words may be understood on many manners, nevertheless upon one manner I may understand them to that purpose which I have said.

¹ 1 John iv. 3.

CHAPTER TWELVE

What knitteth Jhesu to man's soul and what looseneth Him therefrom.

THE knitting and the fastening of Jhesu to a man's soul is by a good will and a great desire to Him only, for to have Him and see Him in His bliss ghostly. The more that this desire is, the faster is Jhesu knit to the soul; the less that the desire is, the looslier is He knit. Then what spirit or what feeling that it be, which lesseth this desire, and would draw it down from the steadfast mind of Jhesu Christ, and from the kindly stying up to Him, this spirit will unknit and undo Jhesu from the soul, and therefore it is not of God, but it is the working of the enemy. Nevertheless, if a spirit or a feeling, or revelation¹ maketh this desire more, knitteth the knot of love and of devotion to Jhesu faster, openeth the sight of the soul into ghostly knowing more clearly, and maketh it more meek in itself; this spirit is of God. Here may thou see somewhat that thou shalt not suffer thine heart wilfully for to rest, nor for to delight wholly, in no

¹ MSS. 2, 3, and 6, "revelation by an angel."

bodily feeling of such manner of comforts or sweetnesses, though they were good ; but thou shalt hold them in thine own sight as they were right nought or little, in regard of ghostly desire and of steadfast thinking on Jhesu Christ, nor cleave¹ the thought of thine heart too mickle upon them.²

But thou shalt aye seek with great business in prayers, that thou mightest come to the ghostly feeling of God ; and that is that thou mightest know the wisdom of God, the endless might of our Lord Jhesu Christ, the great goodness of Him in Himself and in His creatures. For this is contemplation and that other is none. Thus said Saint Paul : *In caritate radicati, et fundati, ut possitis comprehendere cum omnibus sanctis, quæ sit longitudo, et latitudo, sublimitas, et profundum.* Be ye rooted and grounded in charity, that ye might know, he saith, neither sound of ear nor sweet savour in the mouth, nor none such bodily thing, but that ye might know and feel with all holy, which is the length of the endless being of God, the breadth of the wonderful charity and the goodness of God, the height of the almighty majesty of Him, and the groundless deepness of the wisdom of God.³ 7

¹ MSS. 3, 6 and 7, "ne thou schalt not setten."

² MSS. 3 and 6 insert "but thou shalt forgeten hem if thou myght."

³ Eph. iii. 17, 18.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How and in what things a contemplative man should be occupied.

IN knowing and ghostly feeling of these should be the occupation of a contemplative man, for in these four may be understood the full knowing of ghostly things. This occupation is that ilk one thing which Saint Paul coveted, saying thus : *Unum vero, quae retro sunt obliviscens, in anteriora me extendam sequor si quo modo comprehendam supernum bravium.* Thus mickle is this for to say : One thing, as who saith, is lief to me for to covet, and that is that I might forget all things which are hindward or backward, and I shall stretch out mine heart aye forthward, for to feel and to grip the sovereign meed of the endless bliss.¹ Hindward are all bodily things, forthward are ghostly things ; and therefore Saint Paul would forget all bodily thing and his own body also, with this that he might see ghostly things.

¹ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

How in reason and in will virtue beginneth, and in love and in liking it is made perfect.

NOW I have told thee a little of contemplation, what it should be ; for this intent, that thou mightest know it and set it as a mark before the sight of thy soul, and for to desire all thy lifetime for to come to one part of it by the grace of our Lord Jhesu Christ. This is the conforming of a soul to God ; which may not be had, but if he be first reformed by fullhead of virtues turned into affection. And that is when a man loveth virtue, for it is good in itself.

There is many man that hath virtue, as lowness, patience, charity to his even-christian and such other, only in his reason and will, and hath no ghostly delight nor love in them. For oft-time he feeleth grouching, heaviness and bitterness for to do them, and nevertheless yet he doth them, by stirring of reason for dread of God. This man hath virtues in reason and in his will, not the love of them in affection ; but when by the grace of Jhesu, and by ghostly and bodily exercise, reason is y-turned into light, and will into love,

then hath he virtues in affection, for he hath so well gnawen upon the bitter bark of the nut that he hath broken it, and feedeth him with the kernel.¹ That is for to say, the virtues which were first heavy for to do are now turned into very delight and savour, as a man when him liketh in meekness, in patience, in cleanness, in sobriety and in charity, as in any delices. Soothly until virtues be thus turned into affection he may have the second part of contemplation, but to the third soothfastly shall he not come. Now since virtues are disposing to contemplation, then behoves thee for to use certain means for to come to virtues.

¹ MS. 2, on the swete kernel.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Of three means that bring a man to contemplation.

THREE means there be which men most commonly use, that give them to contemplation ; as reading in Holy Writ and of holy teaching, ghostly meditation, and busy prayer with devotion. Reading of Holy Writ, may thou not well use, and therefore thee behoveth more occupy thee in prayer and in meditation. By meditation shalt thou see, how mickle thee wanteth of virtues ; and by prayer shalt thou get them. By meditation shalt thou see thy wretchedness, thy sins, and thy wickedness, as pride, covetise, gluttony, and lechery, wicked stirrings of envy, ire, hatred, melancholy, angriness, bitterness, sloth, and unreasonable heaviness. Thou shalt also see thine heart full of vain shames, and dreads of thy flesh and of the world. All these stirrings will alway boil out of thine heart as water will run out from the spring of a stinking well, and let the sight of thy soul, that thou may neither see nor feel cleanly the love of Jhesu Christ ; for wit thou well till thine heart be mickle y-cleansed through stable truth and busy beholding of Christ's

manhood from such sins, thou may not have ghostly knowing of God¹ perfectly. Witness Himself in the gospel, thus : *Beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*. Blessed be clean of heart for they shall see God.² Also in meditation thou shall see virtues which are needful to thee for to have, as meekness, mildness, patience, rightwiseness, ghostly strength, temperance, cleanness, peace, and soberness, faith, hope, and charity. These virtues thou shalt see in meditation ; how good, how fair, how profitable they are ; and by prayer thou shalt desire them and get them, without the which thou may nought be contemplative. For Job saith thus : *In abundantia ingredieris sepulcrum* ; that is for to say, thou shalt in plenty of good bodily works and ghostly virtues enter thy grave,³ that is the rest in contemplation.

¹ Corrected in MS. I to "feling of him."

² Matt. v. 8.

³ Job v. 26.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

What a man shall use and refuse by virtue of meekness.

NOW if thou shouldest use wisely these ghostly works and securely travail in them, thee behoveth to begin right low. Three things thee needeth for to have first, upon which as upon a secure ground thou shalt set all thy work. These three are, meekness, sure faith, and whole intention to God. First behoveth thee for to have meekness in this manner. Thou shalt hold thy self in thy will and in thy feeling, if thou may, unable to dwell among men, and unworthy to serve God in conversation with His servants, unprofitable to thine even-christian, wanting both cunning and might for to fulfill good works of active life in help of thine even-christian, as other men and women do ; and therefore as a wretch, outcast and refuse of all men and women, art enclosed in an house alone, that thou shouldst hurt no man nor woman by evil ensample, since thou canst not profit them by good working. Over this, thee behoveth look further that since thou art so unable to serve our Lord by bodily works outward, how mickle more thee behoveth hold

thee unworthy and unable to serve Him in ghostly occupation inward. For our Lord is a Spirit, as the prophet saith : *Spiritus ante faciem nostram Christus Dominus*. Before our face a ghost is our Lord Christ.¹ And the kindly service to Him is ghostly, as He saith Himself : *Veri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in spiritu et veritate*. Soothfast servants shall worship Him in spirit and soothfastness.² Then thou that art so boisterous, so lewd, so fleshly, so blind in ghostly things, and namely of thine own soul which thee behoveth first know if thou shouldst come to knowing of God, how shouldst thou then feel thyself able or worthy for to have that state and likeness of contemplative life, the which life as I have said lieth principally in ghostly knowing and feeling of God ? This I say to thee, not that thou shouldst forethink thy purpose and be mis-paid with thine enclosing, but that thou shouldst feel this lowness soothfastly in thine heart if thou might, for it is sooth and no lies. And though³ thou shalt yearn night and day upon thy might for to come as near as thou mayst to that state which thou hast taken, trowing steadfastly that it is best to thee by the mercy of God for to travail in ; and though it be so, that thou may not come to the fullhead of it here in this life,⁴ that thou

¹ Lam. iv. 20.

² John iv. 23.

³ MSS. 2 and 3, insert "thow fele thus, yit and."

⁴ MS. 2, "yit be bisy."

mightest be in the beginning of it, and trust surely for to have the fullhead by the mercy of God in the bliss of heaven. For soothly that is my life ; I feel me so wretched, so frail, and so fleshly, and so far in true feeling from that that I speak and have spoken, that I can nought else but cry mercy, and desire after as I may with an hope that our Lord will bring me thereto of His grace in the bliss of heaven. Do thou so, and better after God giveth thee grace. The feeling of this lowness shall put out from thine heart unreasonable beholding of other men's misliving and deeming of other men's deeds, and it shall drive thee only to behold thyself, as there were no man living but God and thou ; and thou shalt deem and hold thyself more vile and more wretched than is any creature that beareth life, that hardly shall thou be able to suffer thyself, for micklehead of sin and filth that thou shalt feel in thee. Thus behoveth thee for to feel some time, if thou wilt be very meek ; for I tell thee soothly, if thou wilt be truly meek, thee shalt think a venial sin in thyself more grievous and painful to thee, and greater shall be in thy sight sometime, than great deadly sins of other men. For this reason, that thing the which putteth thy soul¹ or letteth it most from the feeling and knowing of God, oweth to be most grievous and painful to thee. But a venial sin of thyself letteth thee more

¹ MS. 2, that thyng that foulyth the soule.

from the feeling and from perfect love of Jhesu Christ than any other man's sin may do, be it never so mickle. Then seemeth it that thou shouldst arise in thine own heart against thyself, for to hate and demean in thyself all manner of sin which letteth thee from the sight of God, more busily than against default of other men. For if thine heart be clean of thine own sins, soothly the sins of all other men shall not hurt thee ; and therefore if thou wilt find rest here and in the bliss of heaven, upon the counsel of one of the holy fathers say ilk a day, " What am I ? " and deem thou no man.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Who should blame men's defaults and deem them, and who not.

BUT now sayst thou, how may this be ? since it is a deed of charity for to reprove men of their defaults ; and for to deem them for their amending, it is a deed of mercy. As to this I answer as me thinketh, that to thee or to any other which hath state and the purpose of life contemplative it falleth not for to leave the keeping of yourself and behold and reprove other men of their defaults, but if it were full great need, so that a man should perish but if he reproveth him. But those men which are active and have sovereignty and cure over others, as prelates and curates and such other, they are bound by their office, and by way of charity, for to see and seek and deem right fully other men's defaults : not of desire and delight for to chastise them, but only for need, with dread of God and in His Name, for love of salvation of their souls. Other men that are active and have no cure over other men, they are bounden for to reprove other men of their defaults by way of charity, only then when the

sin is deadly, and it may not well be corrected by none other man, and when he troweth that the sinner should be amended by his reproof. Else it is better that he cease. That this is sooth, it seemeth by Saint John which had the state of contemplative life, and Saint Peter, which had the state of active life. When our Lord in His last supper with His disciples at privy stirring of Peter to Saint John, told Saint John how Judas should betray Him, Saint John told it not to Saint Peter as he asked, but he turned him, and laid his head upon Christ's breast and was ravished by love into contemplation of God's privities, and so meedfully to him that he forgot both Judas and Saint Peter; in tokening and teaching to other men which would be contemplative that they should dispose them for to do the same.

Then seest thou here somewhat that thou shalt neither deem other men, nor conceive wilfully against them none evil suspicion. But thou shalt love them, and worship them in thine heart, such as lead in the world active life, and suffer many tribulations and temptations which thou sitting in thine house feelest nought of. And they have full mickle travail and disease for their own and other men's sustenance, and many of them had well leifer serve God if they might as thou dost in bodily rest, and nevertheless they in their worldly business flee many sins

which thou if thou wert in their state shouldst fall in, and they do many good deeds which thou couldst not do. It is no doubt that many do thus ; which they are, thou wot not.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Why meek men shall worship all other, and low themselves in their own heart under all other.

AND therefore thou shalt worship all, and set them all in thine heart above thee as thy sovereigns, and cast thee down under their feet, that thou be vilest and lowest in thine own sight. For it is no dread nor peril to thee, how mickle thou may low thyself beneath all other, though it were so that in God's sight thou hadst more grace than another. But it is peril to thee for to high thee and lift thyself in thy thought wilfully above any other man, though he were the most wretched or the most sinful caitiff that is in earth. For our Lord saith, *Qui se humiliat exaltabitur, et qui se exaltat humiliabitur*: Whoso high himself, he shall be lowed, and whoso low himself, he shall be highed.¹ This part of meekness thee behoveth for to have in thy beginning, and by this and by grace shalt thou come to the fullhead of it and of all other virtues. For whoso hath a virtue, he hath all. As mickle as thou hast of meekness, so mickle hast thou of charity,

¹ Luke xiv. 11.

of patience, and of other virtues, though they be not showed outward. Be then busy to get meekness, and hold it ; for it is the first and the last of all virtues. It is the first, for it is ground of all virtues ; as Saint Austin saith, if thou think to build an high house of virtues, ordain first a deep ground of meekness. Also it is the last, for it is keeping and safing of all virtues ; as Saint Gregory saith : He that gathereth virtues without meekness, he is like to him which maketh and beareth powder of spicery in the wind. Do thou never so many good deeds, fast thou, wake thou, or any other good work do thou, if thou have no meekness it is nought that thou dost.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

How men shall do that want the feeling of meekness in affection, not dreading over mickle thereof.

NEVERTHELESS, if thou mayest not feel this meekness in thine heart with affection as thou wouldest, do as thou mayest, meek thyself in thy will by thy reason, trowing that it should be so as I say though thou feel it not. And in that hold thee a more wretch, that thou mayest not feel soothfastly as thou art. And if thou do so, though thy flesh rise there-against, and will not assent to thy will, be not too mickle a-dread, but bear then and suffer the false feeling of thy flesh as a pain. And then thou shalt despise and reprove that feeling, and break down that rising of thine heart, as though thou wouldest be well paid for to be trodden and spurned under every man's feet as a thing which is outcast. And so by the grace of Jhesu Christ [through steadfast thinking on the meanness of His precious manhood]¹ shalt thou mickle abate the stirrings of pride, and the virtue of meekness that was first

¹ Added in margin of MS. 1. Incorporated in text of 8. Omitted from MSS. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 10.

in thy naked will shall be turned into feeling of affection ; without which virtue, either in a true will or in feeling, who so dispose him to serve God in contemplative life, as the blind he shall stumble and never shall he come thereto. The higher he climbeth by bodily penance and other virtues, and hath not this, the lower he falleth. For as Saint Gregory saith, he that cannot perfectly despise himself, he found yet never the meek wisdom of our Lord Jhesu.

CHAPTER TWENTY

How hypocrites and heretics, for wanting of meekness, high themselves in heart before all other.

HYPOCRITES nor heretics feel not this meekness, neither in good will, nor in affection ; but well dry and well cold are their hearts and their reins from the soft feeling of this virtue ; and in so mickle the further they are from it, that they ween for to have it. They gnaw upon the dry bark without, but the sweet kernel of it and the inly savour of it may they not come to. They show outward meekness, in habit, in holy speech, in a lowly bearing, and as it seemeth in many great bodily and ghostly works or virtues. But nevertheless in the will and affection of their heart, where meekness should be principally, it is but feigned. For they deem and despise and set at nought other men ¹ that will not do as they do and teach. They hold them either fools by uncunning, or blinded by fleshly living ; and therefore lift they themselves upon high in their own sight, above all others, weening that they live better than other and that they have only

¹ MS. 2, "other mens dedys."

the soothfastness of good living and singular grace of God, both in knowing and in ghostly feeling, passing other men. And of this sight in themselves riseth a delight in their hearts in the which they worship and praise themselves, as there were none but they. They praise and thank God with lips, but in their hearts they steal as thieves the worship and the thanking from God, and set it in themselves. And so they have neither meekness in will nor in feeling. A fleshly caitiff or a sinner which falleth all day, and he is sorry that he doth so, though he have not meekness in affection, he hath it in a good will. But an heretic or an hypocrite hath neither ; for they have the condition of the pharisee, which came as our Lord saith in the gospel, with the publican to the temple for to pray. And when he came he prayed not nor asked nought of God, for him thought he had no need, but he began for to thank God, and said thus : Lord, I thank thee that thou givest me grace more than any other, that I am not as other men are, robbers, lechers, or such sinners. And he looked beside him, and saw the publican, which he knew for a wretch, knocking on his breast only, crying after mercy. Then he thanked God that he was not such one as he was. For Lord, he said, I fast twice in the week, and I pay truly in tithes. And when he had done, our Lord saith, that he gied home again without

grace as he came, and gat right nought. But now sayest thou, Wherein trespassed this pharisee, since he thanked God, and was sooth as he said ? As to this I answer and say, that this pharisee trespassed in as mickle as he deemed and re-proved in his heart the publican, which was justified of God. And also he trespassed, for he thanked God only with his mouth ; but he delighted him wilfully in a privy pride in himself of the gifts of God, stealing the worship and the praising¹ from God, and set it in himself. This same condition of this pharisee soothly have heretics and hypocrites. They will not gladly pray, and if they pray they low not themselves acknowledging truly their wretchedness, but they make them by a feigning for to thank and praise God, and speak of Him with the mouth. But their delight is vain and false and not in God, and yet they ween not so. They cannot praise God for as the wise man saith : *Non est speciosa laus in ore peccatoris*, It is neither fair nor seemly praising of God in the mouth of a sinner.² Wherefore it is profitable to thee and to me, and to such other wretches, for to leave the condition of this pharisee and feigned praising of God, and follow the publican in lowness, asking mercy and forgiveness of sins and grace

¹ MS. lowynge, lowen. MS. 2, gives lovyng, love : but the context shows that louing (Fr. louange) is meant.

² Ecclus. xv. 9.

of ghostly virtues ; that they might afterwards with a clean heart soothfastly thank Him and praise Him and give Him wholly the worship without feigning. For our Lord asketh thus by His prophet : *Super quem requiescit Spiritus meus nisi super humilem et contritum spiritu et tremementem sermones meos ?* Upon whom shall My Spirit rest ? and He answereth Himself and saith, Upon none, but upon the meek, poor and contrite in heart and dreading My words.¹ Then if thou wilt have the Spirit of God ruling thine heart, have meekness and dread in Him.

¹ Isa. lxvi. 2.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

What things men ought to trow by sure faith.

THE second thing which thee behoves to have, is secure troth in all articles of the faith, and the sacraments of Holy Kirk, trowing them steadfastly with all the will in thine heart. And though thou feel any stirring in thine heart against any of them by suggestion of the enemy, for to put thee in doubt and in dread of them, be thou steadfast, and not too mickle a-dread of feeling of such stirrings, but forsake thine own wit without disputing or ransacking of them, and set thy faith generally in the faith of Holy Kirk, and charge not the stirring of thine heart which as thee thinketh is contrary thereto. For that stirring is not thy faith ; but the faith of Holy Kirk is thy faith, though thou neither see it nor feel it. And bear then such stirrings patiently as a scourge of our Lord, by the which He will cleanse thine heart and make thy faith steadfast. Also thee behoveth love and worship in thine heart all the laws and ordinances made by prelates and rulers of Holy Kirk, either in declaring of the faith, or of the sacraments

or in general governance of all Christian men.

Meekly and truly assent to them ; though it be so that thou know not the cause of their ordinance, and though thee think that some were unreasonable, thou shall not deem them, nor reprove them. Worship them all, though they belong but little to thee ; nor receive none opinion, nor fantasy, nor singular conceit under colour of more holiness, as some do that are not wise, neither by thine own imagining nor by kenning of none other man, which contrarieth to the least ordinance or general teaching of all Holy Kirk. And over this, thou shalt trow steadfastly that thou art ordained of our Lord to be saved as one of His chosen, by His mercy, and stir not from this hope. What so thou hearest or seest, what temptation thou be in, and though thee think thee so mickle a wretch that thou wert worthy for to sink to hell for that thou dost no good, nor servest not God as thou shouldest do, yet hold thee in this troth and in this hope, and ask mercy, and all shall be right well. Yea, and though all the devils of hell appearing in bodily likeness sleeping or waking said to thee that thou shouldest not be saved, or all men living in earth or all the angels in heaven, if it might be said, said to thee the same, thou shouldst not believe them, nor be stirred mickle from this hope of salvation. This I say to thee, for some are so weak and so simple, that when

they have given them all wholly to serve God upon their cunning, if they feel any stirring within by incasting of the enemy, or else from without of any word of the devil's prophets which men call soothsayers, that they should not be saved, or their state or their manner of living were not pleasing to God, they be astonied and stirred with such words, and so for uncunning they fall some time into great heaviness, and as it were in a despair of salvation. Wherefore as me thinketh it is speedful to ilk a creature which by grace of our Lord Jhesu is in full will to forsake sin, and as clearly as his conscience telleth him he suffereth no deadly sin rest in him that he shriveth not him soon thereof, and meeketh him to the sacraments of Holy Kirk, for to have a trust of salvation. And mickle more then they that give them wholly to God, and flee venial sins upon their might. And on the contrary wise, as perilous it is to him which lieth wittingly in a deadly sin for to have trust of salvation, and in hope of that trust will not forsake his sin, nor low him truly to God and to Holy Kirk.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Of an whole and a stable intention.¹

THE third thing which is needful to thee for to have in thy beginning is an whole and a stable intention ; that is for to say an whole will and a desire only for to please God. For that is charity, without which all were nought that thou dost. And thou shall set thine intent alway for to seek and travail how thou mightest please Him, no time for to cease wilfully of good occupation either bodily or ghostly. Nor thou shall not set in thine heart a time, as thus long thou wouldest serve God, and then to suffer thine heart wilfully fall down into vain thoughts and idle occupations, weening that it were needful for saving of thy bodily kind ; leaving the keeping of thine heart and good occupation, seeking a rest and comfort for a time outward by thy bodily wits or in worldly vanities, as it were for a recreation of the spirit, for it should be more sharp afterward to ghostly travail. For I trow it is not sooth. I say not that thou shalt always be

¹ MS. 6. How a stable entent is nedeful to him that wolde plese God.

able in deed to perform thine intention ; for oft times thy bodily need, eating,¹ sleeping and speaking, and the frailty of thy flesh shall let thee be thou never so busy, and hinder thee. But I would that thine intent and thy will were alway whole for to travail bodily or ghostly, and no time to be idle, but alway lifting up thine heart by desire to God and to the bliss of heaven, whether thou eatest or drinkest, or any other bodily travail that thou usest ; also mickle as thou mayst wilfully leave it not. For if thou have this intent it shalt make thee aye quick and sharp in thy travail ; and if thou fall by frailty or negligence in any idle occupation, or in vain speech, it shall smite upon thine heart sharply as a prickle,² and make thee for to irk all vanities, and for to turn again hastily [to inward thinking on Jhesu Christ and]³ to some good occupation. For as anent thy bodily kind, it is good for to use discretion in eating, drinking, and sleeping, and in all manner bodily penance, and in long prayer by speech, or in bodily feeling by great fervour of devotion, either in weeping or such other, and also in imagining of the spirit. When a man feels no grace in all these works it is good to keep discretion,⁴ for the mean is the best. But

¹ MS. 2, "as mete and drynke."

² MSS. 3 and 6, "as scharply as an hamer."

³ Omitted in MSS. 3, 5 and 6.

⁴ MSS. 3, 5 and 6, insert "and for to leven of sum time."

in destroying of sin by keeping of thine heart, and in aye lasting desire of virtues, and of the bliss of heaven, and for to have the ghostly knowing and loving of Jhesu Christ, hold thou no mean, for the more that it is of this, the better it is. For thou shalt hate sin, as all fleshly loves and dreads, in thine heart without ceasing, and thou shalt love virtues and cleanness, and desire them,¹ without stinting if thou mightest. I say not that this is needful to salvation, but I hope it is speedful ; and if thou keep it thou shalt profit more in a year in virtues, than thou shalt without this intent profit in seven years.

¹ MS. 2, "with al thyn herte."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A rehearsing of things spoken before, and what thou shalt do therewith.

NOW have I told thee first of the end which thou shalt behold in thy desire, and draw toward it as mickle as thou might. Also I have said thee of the beginning, what thee needeth for to have, as meekness, sure trowth, and an whole intent to God ; upon the which ground thou shalt set thy ghostly house, by prayer and meditation, and other ghostly virtues. Then say I to thee thus : pray thou, or think thou, or any other deed that thou dost, good by grace or bad by thine own frailty, or what that thou feelest, seest, or hearest, smellest or savourest, without in thy bodily wits, or within in imagining, knowing or feeling in thy reason : bring it all within the trowth and the rules of Holy Kirk and cast all in the mortar of meekness and break it small with the pestle of dread of God, and throw the powder of all this in the fire of desire, and offer it so to God. And I tell thee forsooth, well shall that offering liken in the sight of thy Lord Jhesu, and sweet shall the smoke of this fire smell to the face of thy

Lord Jhesu. This is for to say, draw all this that thou feelest within the trowth of Holy Kirk and break thyself in meekness, and offer the desire of thine heart only to thy Lord Jhesu, for to have Him and nought else but Him. And if thou do thus, I expect by the grace of Jhesu Christ thou shalt never be overcome by thine enemy. Thus teacheth us Saint Paul, when he said thus : *Sive manducatis, sive bibitis, sive quid aliud facitis, omnia in nomine Domini facite* : Whether ye eat or drink or what manner of deed that ye do, all do in the name of our Lord Jhesu Christ,¹ forsaking yourself, and offer it up to Him. Means which thou shalt most use, as I have before said, are prayer and meditation. First shall I show thee a little of prayer, and then of meditation.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Of prayer, that is speedful to get cleanness in heart and virtues.

PRAYER is profitable and speedful to use for to get cleanness of heart by destroying of sin and receiving of virtues. Not that thou shouldest by thy prayer ken our Lord what thou desirest, for He knoweth well enough what that thee needeth ; but for to make thee able and ready by thy prayer that thou mightest receive as a clean vessel the grace that our Lord will give freely to thee, which grace may not be felt till thou be assayed ¹ and purified by the fire of desire in devout prayer. For though it be so that prayer is not the cause for which our Lord giveth grace, nevertheless it is a way by the which grace freely given cometh to a soul.

But now desirest thou peradventure for to know how thou shouldest pray and upon what thing thou shalt set the point of thy thought in thy prayer ; and also what prayer were best to thee for to use. As unto the first, I answer and say thus : that when thou art waken of thy

¹ MS. 2, "al fyned and purified."

sleep, and art ready for to pray, thou shalt feel thyself fleshly and heavy ; aye downward unto vain thoughts either of dreams or of fantasies, or unreasonable businesses of the world or of thy flesh. Then behoveth thee for to quicken thine heart by prayer, and stir it as mickle as thou might to some devotion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

How men should pray, and whereon the point of the thought shall be set in prayer.

AND in thy prayer thou shalt not set thine heart on any earthly thing,¹ but all thy travail shall be for to draw in thy thought from all beholdings of all earthly thing, that thy desire might be as it were made naked and bare from all earthly things,² aye upward stying into Jhesu Christ³ Whom thou might neither see bodily [as He is in His Godhead] nor by bodily likeness in imagination; but thou might [through devout and continual beholding of the meekness of His precious manhead]⁴ feel His goodness and the grace of His Godhead, when thy desire is eased and holpen and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight [in Him of His ghostly presence],⁵ and held still there in

¹ MSS. 2, 3, 5 and 6, give "bodily" for "earthly" throughout.

² MS. 6, "from the sighte of al bodily and erthly thing."

³ MS. 9, "as if you wer in his presence."

⁴ MSS. 5 and 6, omit bracketed phrases.

⁵ MSS. 5 and 6 substitute "delite of God."

mickle of the time of thy prayer, so that thou hast no great mind of earthly thing, or else the mind hurteth but little. If thou pray thus, then canst thou pray well ; for prayer is nought else but a styng desire of the heart into God by withdrawing [of the heart]¹ from all earthly thoughts. And so is prayer likened to a fire which of its own kind leaveth the lowness of the earth and alway styeth up into the air. Right so desire in prayer, when it is touched and lightened of the ghostly fire which is God, it is aye upstyng ² to Him whom it cometh from.

¹ Not in MSS. 5 and 6.

² MS. 2, "is alway styng up kyndely."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Of the fire of love.

ALL men that speaketh of the fire of love knoweth not well what it is ; for what it is can I not tell thee, save this may I tell thee, that ¹ it is neither bodily, nor it is not bodily felt. A soul may feel it in prayer, or in devotion, which soul is in the body, but he feeleth it not by no bodily wit. For though it be so, that if it work in a soul the body may turn into an heat and as it were chafen for likened travail of the spirit ; nevertheless the fire of love is not bodily, for it is only in the ghostly desire of the soul. This is no doubt to no man or woman that feeleth devotion ² ; but some are simple, and ween because that it is called fire that it should be hot as bodily fire is. And for this I say that I have said.

¹ MS. 2, "I fele that it is."

² MS. 2, "felith and knowith devocioun."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

That certain prayer in speech ordained of God and of Holy Church is best to them that are bound and ordained thereto, and to them that give them newly to devotion.

NOW as to the tother, for to know what prayer were best for to use, I shall say as me thinketh.

Thou shalt understand that there is three manner of prayer : the first is prayer of speech made specially of God, as is the Paternoster, and also more generally by the ordinance of Holy Kirk, as matins, evensong and hours ; and also made by devout men of other special sayings, as to our Lord and our Lady, and to His saints. As to this manner of prayer, which is called vocal, me thinketh unto thee that art religious, and by custom and by rule art bound for to say matins and hours, I hold it most speedful for to say them as devoutly as thou might. For when thou sayest thy matins, thou sayest also thy Paternoster principally ; and over more for to stir thee to more devotion was it ordained for to say psalms and hymns and such other which are made by the Holy Ghost, as the Paternoster is. And therefore thou shalt not say them speedily and

recklessly, as thou wert evil paid that thou art bound with them, but thou shalt gather thine affection and thy thought for to say them more soberly and more devoutly than any other special prayer of devotion, trowing for sooth since it is the prayer of Holy Kirk there is no prayer so profitable to thee which is vocal for to use commonly as that is. And so shalt thou put away all thy heaviness, and by grace thou shalt turn thy need into a good will, and thy bond into a great freedom, that it shall no letting be to thee of ghostly occupation. And after these thou mayst if thou wilt use other, as the Paternoster and any such other. And of these, that in which thou feelest most savour and most ghostly comfort, in that hold I the best to thee. This manner of prayer is speedful to ilk a man commonly in the beginning of his conversion, for to use most of any other ghostly occupation. For a man in the beginning is boisterous and rude and fleshly, but if he have the more grace, and cannot think ghostly thoughts in meditation ; for his soul is not yet cleansed from old sin. And therefore I expect it is more speedful for to use this manner prayer, as for to say his Paternoster and his Ave and read upon his psalter and such other. For he that cannot run lightly by ghostly prayer, for his feet of knowing and loving are sick for sin, him needeth for to have a secure staff for to hold him by. This staff is special prayer of speech

ordained of God and of Holy Kirk in help of men's souls ; by the which prayer a soul of a fleshly man that is alway falling downward into worldly thoughts and fleshly affections shall lift up from him, and be holden by it as by a staff, fed with sweet words of the prayer as a child with milk, and ruled by it that he fall not into errors nor fantasies by his vain meditations. For in this manner of prayer is no deceit ; who so will, steadfastly and meekly travail therein.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

What peril it is to men that in the beginning of their turning to God leave too soon the common prayer of Holy Church and give them to meditation.

THEN may thou see by this, that these men, if any be such, that in the beginning of their conversion or soon after, when they have felt a little ghostly comfort either in devotion or in knowing and nought are stabled yet therein, they leave such prayer vocal too soon, and other bodily exercise, and give them wholly to meditation, they are not wise. For often in the rest of their meditation they imagine and think of ghostly things upon their own wit, and follow their bodily feeling, and have not yet received grace thereto. And therefore they by undiscution, oft times overtravail their wits and break their bodily might, and so they fall into fantasies and singular conceits, or in open errors, and let the grace that God giveth them by such vanities. The cause of all this is a privy pride and presumption of themselves ; as when they have felt a little grace they ween that it is so mickle, passing other, that they fall in vain glory, and so

they leave it. If they wist how little it were that they feel in regard of that that God giveth or may give they should be ashamed for to speak out thereof, but it were in great need. Of this manner of prayer by speech speaketh David in the Psalter thus : *Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi ; voce mea ad Dominum deprecatus sum.* David the prophet, for to stir other men for to pray both with heart and with mouth said : With my voice I cried to God, and with my speech besought our Lord.¹

¹ Ps. cxlii. 1.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Of the second manner of prayer, that is in speech not certain, but followeth the stirrings of them that are in devotion.

THE second manner of prayer is by speech, but it is not of any certain special saying ; and this is when a man or a woman feeleth grace of devotion by the gift of God, and in his devotion speaketh to Him as he were bodily in His presence, with such words as accord most to his stirring for the time and as come to his mind after sundry regards which he feeleth in heart, either rehearsing his sins and his wretchedness or the malice and the sleights of the enemy, or else the goodness and the mercy of God. And with that he crieth with desire of heart and with speech of mouth to our Lord for succour and help, as a man that were in peril among his enemies or in sickness, showing his sores to God as to a leech ; saying thus, as David said : *Eripe me de inimicis meis, Deus meus* : Ah, Lord, deliver me from mine enemies,¹ or else thus : *Sana animam meam, quia peccavi tibi* : Ah, Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee,² or such other as come to mind.

¹ Ps. lix. 1.

² Ps. xli. 4.

And also him thinketh so mickle goodness and grace and mercy in God, that him liketh with great affection of the heart for to love Him and thank Him by such words and psalms as accord to the loving and the praising of God : as David said : *Confitemini Domino, quoniam bonus, quoniam in seculum misericordia ejus* : Loveth and praiseth our Lord for He is good and merciful :¹ and by such other as he is stirred for to say.

¹ Ps. cxxxvi. 1.

CHAPTER THIRTY

That this manner of prayer pleaseth much God, and maketh a man to have him as he were drunken, and woundeth his soul with the sword of love.

THIS manner of prayer mickle pleaseth God, for it is only of the affection in the heart ; and therefore it goeth never away unsped without some grace. This prayer longeth to the second part of contemplation, as I have said before. Whoso hath this gift of God fervently, him behoveth for the time flee presence and company of all men and to be alone that he be not letted. Whoso have it, hold it while he may ; for it may not long last in the fervour. For if grace come plenteously, it is travaillous wonderly to the spirit, though it be liking ; and it is mickle wasting to the bodily kind who so mickle use it, for it maketh the body, if grace come mightily, for to stir and turn here and there as a man that were mad or drunken and could have no rest. This is a point of the passion of love, the which by great violence and mastery breaketh down all lusts and likings of any earthly thing, and it woundeth the soul with the blissful sword of love, that the

body falleth down and may not bear it. This touching is of so great might that the most vicious or fleshly man living in earth, if he were well touched once mightily with this sharp sword, he should be right serious and sober a great while after, and loathe all the lusts and likings of his flesh, and of all earthly things which he had before most delight in.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

How the fire of love wasteth all fleshly lusts, as other fire wasteth all bodily things.

OF this manner of feeling speaketh the prophet Jeremy thus : *Et factus est in corde meo quasi ignis exaestuans, claususque in ossibus meis, et defeci, ferre non sustinens.* This is thus mickle for to say and understand : The love and the feeling of God was made in mine heart not fire but as fire glowing,¹ for as bodily fire burneth and wasteth all bodily things where it cometh, right so ghostly fire, as is the love of God, burneth and wasteth all fleshly loves and likings in a man's soul, and this fire is stoken ² in my bones [as the prophet saith of himself].³ That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone ; and that is within, not without in the wits. Nevertheless, it is so mighty within that it smiteth out into the body, and doth all the body quake and tremble ; it is so far from the bodily kind and so

¹ Jer. xx. 9.

² MS. 6, " he saith is fast sette."

³ Omitted in M.S. 6.

uncouth that he cannot reason of it and may not bear it, but faileth and falleth down, as the prophet saith. And therefore our Lord tempereth it and withdraweth the fervour, and suffereth the heart fall into a sobriety of more softness. Who so can pray thus often, he speedeth soon in his travail. He shall get more of virtues in a little time than some man without this, or another as good shall get in long time, for all the bodily penance that he might do ; and who so hath this, it needeth not for to charge the bodily kind with more penance than it beareth if he have it often.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Of the third manner of prayer, that is only in the heart without speech of mouth.

THE third manner of prayer is only in the heart without speech, by great rest and quietness¹ of the body and of the soul. A clean heart him behoveth to have that should pray well thus, for it is of such men and women that by long travail bodily and ghostly, or else by such sharp smittings of love as I have before said, come into a rest of spirit so that their affection is turned into a ghostly savour, that they may ever continually pray in their heart, and love and praise God without great letting of temptations or of vanities, as I have before said in the second part of contemplation. Of this manner of prayer saith Saint Paul thus: *Nam si orem lingua, spiritus meus orat, mens autem mea sine fructu est. Quid ergo? orabo et spiritu, orabo et mente; psallam spiritu, psallam et mente.* This is thus mickle for to say: If I pray with my tongue only by will of the spirit and by travail, the prayer is meedful, but my soul is not fed, for it feeleth not the fruit

¹ MS. 1, sowfnesse.

of ghostly sweetness by understanding. What shall I then do ? saith Saint Paul. And he answereth : I shall pray by travail and desire of the spirit, and I shall pray also more inwardly in my spirit without travail, in ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and the sight of God ; by the which sight and feeling of love my soul shall be fed.¹ Thus as I understand, Saint Paul could pray. Of this manner of prayer speaketh our Lord in Holy Writ by figure, thus : *Ignis in altari meo semper ardebit, et cotidie sacerdos surgens mane subjiciet us ligna, ut ignis non extinguatur.* This is for to say thus mickle : The fire of love shall ever be light in the soul of a devout and clean man or woman, the which is altar of our Lord, and the priest shall ilk a day at morn lay to sticks and nourish the fire.² That is to say this man shall by holy psalms, clean thoughts, and fervent desires nourish the fire of love in his heart, that it go not out no time. This rest our Lord giveth to some of His servants, as it were for a reward of their travail and a shadow of the love which they shall have in the bliss of heaven.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15.

² Lev. vi. 12. The text does not agree with the Vulgate.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

How men should do that are travailled with vain thoughts in their prayer.

BUT now sayest thou, that I speak over high to thee in this manner of prayer, for it is no mastery to me for to say it, but for do it there is mastery. Thou sayest that thou canst not pray thus devoutly, nor so wholly in heart as I speak of. For when thou wouldest have the mind of thine heart upward to God in thy prayer, thou feelest so mickle many thoughts in vain of thine own deeds before done, or what thou shalt do, and of other men's deeds, and such many other ; letting and tarrying thee so, that thou mayest neither feel savour nor rest ¹ nor devotion in thy saying, and oftentimes the more thou travaillest to keep thine heart, the further it is from thee and the harder, sometime from the beginning to the last end, that thee thinketh it is but y-lost, all that thou dost. As unto this that thou sayest, that I spoke too high to thee of prayer, I grant well that I speak otherwise than I can or may do. Nevertheless I say it for this intent, that thou

¹ MS. 2, "in thi prayer."

shouldest know how we ought to pray if we did well. And since we may not do so, that we know then meekly our feebleness and cry God mercy. Our Lord bade so Himself when He said : *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, ex tota anima tua, et ex omnibus viribus tuis*. Thou shalt love God of all thine heart and all thy soul and all thy might.¹ It is impossible to any man for to fulfill this bidding so fully as it is said, living in earth, and yet natheless our Lord bade us love so ; for this intent, as Saint Bernard sayeth, that we should know thereby our feebleness and then meekly cry mercy, and we shall have it. Nevertheless I shall tell thee as me thinketh in this asking.

When thou shalt pray, make thine intent and thy will in the beginning as whole and as clean to God as thou mayest shortly in thy mind, and then begin and do as thou mayest ; and though thou be never so mickle letted against thy first will be not too mickle a-dread, nor too angry with thyself nor impatient against God, that He giveth not thee that savour and ghostly sweetness with devotion as thee thinketh that He giveth to other creatures. But see thereby thine own feebleness and bear it easily, holding in thine own sight thy prayer, feeble² as it is, with meekness of heart, trusting also securely in the mercy of our Lord, that He shall make it good [and profitable

¹ Luke x. 27.

² MS. 2, "simple as hit is."

to thee]¹ more than thou knowest or feelest.² For wit thou well that thou art excused of thy debt, and thou shalt have meed for it as for any other good deed that thou dost in charity, though thine heart were not thereupon in the doing. Therefore do that longeth to thee, and suffer our Lord give what He will, and ken Him not ; and though thee think thee reckless and negligent, as thou wert in great default for such things, yet nevertheless shalt thou for this default and all other venials, which may not be eschewed in this wretched life, lift up thine heart to God acknowledging thy wretchedness, and cry mercy with a good trust of forgiveness.³ And strive no more therewith, nor hang no longer thereupon, as thou wouldest by mastery not feel such wretchednesses. Leave off and go to some other good deed, bodily or ghostly ; and think for to do better another time. But though thou fall another time in the same, yea an hundred times, a thousand times, yet do as I have said, and all shall be well. Furthermore a soul⁴ that never may find rest of heart in prayer, but all her lifetime is striving with her thoughts and tarried and troubled with them, if she keep her in meekness and charity in other sides, she shall have full mickle meed in heaven for her good travail.

¹ MS. 9, omits.

² MSS. 2 and 9, insert " and al schal be well."

³ MS. 2. " And God schal forgive thee."

⁴ MSS. 2 and 3. " For ther is many a sowle."

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Of meditation of sinful men, after that they be turned wholly to God.

NOW of meditation shall I tell thee a little, as me thinketh. Thou shalt understand that in meditations may none certain rule well be set aye a man for to keep ; for they are in the free gift of our Lord, after the sundry disposings of chosen souls and after the state that they be in. And also after that they profit in virtues and in their estate, so He increaseth the meditations, both in ghostly knowing and loving of Him ; for who so be aye likewise in knowing of God and of ghostly things, it seemeth that he waxeth but a little in the love of God. And that may be, and showed openly in the apostles ; when they in the day of Pentecost were fulled with burning love of the Holy Ghost, they were made no fools nor foltes, but they were made wonder wise, both in knowing and in speaking of God and ghostly things, as mickle as a man might have in flesh living. Thus speaketh Holy Writ of them, *Repleti sunt omnes Spiritu sancto et coeperunt loqui magnalia Dei.* They were fulfilled of the

Holy Ghost, and they began to speak the great marvels of God.¹ And all that knowing they had by ravishing in love of the Holy Ghost.²

Sundry meditations there are which our Lord putteth in a man's heart. Some shall I tell thee, as me thinketh ; for this intent, if thou feel any of them, that thou shouldest the better travail in them. In the beginning of conversion of such a man that hath been mickle fouled with worldly or fleshly sins, commonly his thought is most upon his sins, with great compunction and sorrow of heart, great weepings and many tears of the eye, meekly and busily asking mercy and forgiveness of God for them. And if he be touched sharply, for our Lord will make him soon clean, him shall think that his sins are aye in his sight, so foul and so horrible that hardly shall he be able to bear himself ; ³ and though he shrive him never so cleanly, yet shall he feel biting and fretting of conscience, that him shall think that he is not shriven aright. And hardly may he have any rest, in so mickle that he should not endure such travail, were it not that our Lord of His mercy comforteth him some time as He will, by great devotions of His passion or of some other, as He will give it. Upon this manner worketh our Lord in some men's hearts, more or less as he will. And all this is the great mercy of our Lord,

¹ Acts ii. 4, 11. ² MS. 2, "and divers meditacions."

³ MS. 2, "for hevyness of synne."

that not only will forgive the sin for the trespass, but He will both forgive the trespass and the pain in purgatory, for such a little pain here of biting of conscience. And also if He will dispose a man for to receive any special gift of the love of God, him behoveth first be scoured and cleansed by such a fire of compunction for all the great sins before done. Of this manner travail speaketh David in many places of the psalter, and specially in the psalm *Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.*¹

¹ Psa. li. i.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

That the meditation of the manhood of Christ or of His passion is given of God, and how it shall be known when it is given.

AND then after this travail, and some time withal, such a man or else another, the which by grace of God hath been kept in innocence, our Lord giveth a meditation of His manhood ; or of His birth or of His passion, and of compassion of our Lady Saint Mary. When this meditation is made by the Holy Ghost, then is it right profitable and gracious, and that shalt thou wit by this token : when it is so that thou art stirred to a meditation in God, and suddenly thy thought is drawn out from all worldly and fleshly things and thee thinketh as thou saw in thy soul thy Lord Jhesu in a bodily likeness, as He was in earth, and how He was taken of the Jews and bound as a thief, beaten and despised, scourged and deemed to the death, how lowly He bare the cross upon His back, and how cruelly He was nailed thereupon ; also of the crown of thorns upon His head, and of the sharp spear that stang Him to the heart,¹ and thou in this ghostly sight

¹ MS. 2, " to his swete blessedde herte."

feelest thine heart stirred to so great compassion and pity of thy Lord Jhesu that thou mournest, and weapest, and cryest with all the might of thy body and of thy soul, wondering the goodness and love, the patience and the meekness of thy Lord Jhesu,¹ that He would for so sinful a caitiff as thou art suffer so mickle pain. And nevertheless thou feelest so mickle goodness and mercy in our Lord that thine heart riseth up into a love and a gladness of Him with many sweet tears, having a great trust of forgiveness of thy sins, and of salvation of thy soul by the virtue of this precious passion. Then when the mind of Christ's passion or any point of His manhood is thus made in thine heart by such a ghostly sight, with devout affection answering thereto ; wit thou well then that is not of thine own working, nor feigning of no wicked spirit, but by the grace of the Holy Ghost ; for it is an opening of the ghostly eye into Christ's manhood. And it may be called the fleshly love of God, as Saint Bernard calleth it, in as mickle as it is set in the fleshly kind of Christ. And it is right good, and a great help in destroying of great sins, and a good way for to come to virtues. And so after to contemplation of the Godhead. For a man shall not come to ghostly delight in contemplation of Christ's Godhead, but he come first in imagination by bitterness and by compassion and

¹ MS. 2, "our swete Lord Jhesu."

by steadfast thinking of His manhood. Thus Saint Paul did. First he said thus : *Nichil judicavi me scire inter vos, nisi Jhesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum* : I showed you right nought that I could, but Jhesu Christ and Him crucified.¹ As if he had said : My knowing and my trust is only in the passion of Christ. And therefore said he thus also : *Michi autem absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jhesu Christi*. Forboden be from me all manner of joy and liking, but in the cross and in the passion of our Lord Jhesu Christ.² And nevertheless afterward he said thus : *Praedicamus vobis Christum Dei virtutem, et Dei sapientiam*, as who saith : First I preached of the manhood and the passion of Christ ; now I preach to you of the Godhead, as Christ, might and endless wisdom of God.³

¹ 1. Cor. ii. 2.² Gal. vi. 14.³ 1 Cor. i. 24.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

That the meditation of the passion of Christ is withdrawn from them that it is given to oft-times for divers causes.

THIS manner of meditation ¹ a man hath not aye when he would, but when our Lord will give it. Unto some men and women He giveth it all their lifetime, by times, when He visiteth them ; as some men and women are so tender in their affection that when they hear men speak or else that they think of His precious passion, their hearts melt in devotion and are fed and comforted ² against all manner temptations of the enemy, and that is a great gift of God. To some men He giveth it first plenteously, and afterward He withdraweth it for diverse causes, either if a man wax proud of it in his own sight, or for some other sin by the which he maketh himself unable for to receive the grace ; or else our Lord withdraweth it and all other devotions sometime from a man or a woman, for He will suffer him for to be assayed by temptations of his enemy, and

¹ MS. 2, "with gracious compunccioun."

² MS. 2, "by the vertue of it."

so will He dispose a man for to know and feel Him more ghostly. For He said so Himself to His disciples : *Expedit vobis ut ego vadam ; si autem non abiero, Paracletus non veniet ad vos.* It is speedful to you that I go from you bodily, for if I go not the Holy Ghost may not come to you.¹ For as long as He was with them, they loved Him mickle, but it was fleshly in the manhood ; and therefore it was speedful to them that He should withdraw the bodily form from their sight that the Holy Ghost might come to them, and teach them for to love and know in Him more ghostly, as He did on the day of Pentecost. Right so it is speedful to some that our Lord withdraw a little the bodily and the fleshly likeness from the eye of the soul, that the heart might be set and fixed more busily in ghostly desire and seeking of His Godhead.

¹ John xvi. 7.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Of divers temptations of the fiend.

NEVERTHELESS it behoveth a man for to suffer many temptations first, and these temptations fall oftentimes to some men and women after when comfort is withdrawn upon diverse manners, by malice of the enemy, as thus. When the devil perceiveth devotion mickle withdrawn, that the soul is left as it were naked for a time, then sendeth he to some men temptations of lechery or of gluttony, so hot and so burning that them shall think they felt never none so grievous in all their lifetime before when they gave them most to sin. In so mickle that they shall think it impossible for to stand long and suffer, that they shall needs fall but if they have help. And therefore have they then mickle sorrow, both for lacking of comfort and devotion, which they were wont to have, and they have mickle dread of falling from God by such open sins. And all this worketh the devil at the sufferance of God, for to make them forethink ¹ their good purpose and turn again to sin as they were wont to do ;

¹ MS. 2, "make hem to forsake."

but who so will abide awhile and suffer a little pain and not turn again to sin for nothing, the hand of our Lord is full near and helpeth full soon. For He keepeth him full securely, and the man wots not how ; as the prophet David saith in the person of our Lord : *Cum ipso sum in tribulatione, eripiam eum et glorificabo eum.* I am with him in his tribulation, and in temptation I shall deliver him, and shall make him glorious in My bliss.¹ Some men he tempteth by ghostly sins maliciously, as by mistrowing of the faith² or of the sacrament of God's Body, also of despair or of blasphemy in our Lord or any of His saints, or loathing of their life, or bitterness and unreasonable heaviness, or of too mickle dread of themselves and of their body, if they put them all wholly to God's service. Some men he tempteth also, and namely solitary men and women, by dreads and uglinesses and quakings and shakings ; either appearing to them in bodily likeness or else in imagining, sleeping and waking, and vexeth them so that hardly may they have any rest. And also on many other wises he tempteth more than I can or may say.

¹ Psa. xci. 15.

² MSS. 2 and 9, "articles of the faith."

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Of divers remedies against temptations of the fiend.

REMEDY unto such men and women that are thus travailed or any other wise, may be this : first that they will [put all their trust in our Lord Jhesu Christ and bring to mind often His passion and the pains that He suffered for us, and that they then]¹ trow stedfastly that all this sorrow and travail that they suffer in such temptations, which to an uncunning man seemeth a forsaking of God, that it is no reproving,² nor no forsaking, but assaying for their betterment ; either for cleansing of their sins before done, or for great increasing of their meed, and disposing to mickle grace, if they will suffer a while and stand fast³ that they turn not again wilfully to sin. Another remedy is that they dread not [nor charge not as for a sin]⁴ nor set not at heart such malicious stirrings of despair or blasphemy, or of the sacra-

¹ Not in MSS. 3, 4, and 10. Added on margin of MS. 1. Forms part of text in MSS. 2 and 9.

² MSS. 2, 4, 7, and 10, "of God."

³ MS. 9, "abyde and suffre a little while and stonde faste with a naked trothe and stedfast minde of Jhesu Crist."

⁴ Not in MSS. 4, 9, and 10.

ment or any such other that were ugly for to bear, for the feeling of these temptations fouls the soul no more than if he heard a hound bark or felt a flea bite. They tease the soul, but they harm not the soul, if a man would despise them and set them at nought. For it is not good for to strive with them, for to put them out by mastery ; for the more that they strive with such thoughts the more they cleave to them. And therefore they shall as mickle as they may draw out the thought from them,¹ and set it to some other occupation. And yet if they will aye hang upon them, then it is good to them that they be not angry nor heavy for to feel them, but that they with a good trust in God will bear them, as it were a bodily pain, and a scourge of our Lord, for cleansing of their sins, as long as He will [for His love, as He was scourged and bare the Cross for their love.]² And over this it is good to them, for to show their hearts to some wise man in the beginning before they be rooted in the heart, and that they leave their own wit and follow the counsel of him ; and that they show not them lightly to none unknowing and worldly man, which never has felt such temptations, for they might lightly bring a simple soul in despair by unknowing of himself. Of this manner of temptations, by the which a man seemeth for-

¹ MS. 2. "As if they chargyde hem nowt."

² Added in margin with *caveat*. Not in MSS. 3, 4, and 10.

saken of God and is nought, in comfort of them that are tempted our Lord saith thus by His prophet: *In modico dereliqui, te, et in momento indignationis mea percussi te, et in miserationibus meis multis congregabo te.* In a little I forleft thee, that is to say I suffered thee for to be teased a little, and in a point of My wrath I smote thee, that is to say, all the penance and the pain that thou sufferest here is but a point of My wrath in regard of the pain of hell or of purgatory; and yet in Mine manifold mercies I shall together gather thee,¹ that is to say when thee thinketh that thou art forsaken, then shall I of My great mercy gather thee again to Me, for then when thou weenest that thou art as it were lost, then shall our Lord help thee, as Job saith: *Cum te consumptum putaveris, orieris ut lucifer et habebis fiduciam.* That is for to say, When thou art brought so low by travail of temptation that thee thinketh none help² nor no comfort, but as thou wert a fordome man, yet stand stiffly in hope, and pray God, and soothly thou shalt suddenly spring up as the day star in gladness of heart, and have a very trust in God, as Job said.³

¹ Isa. liv. 7. ² MS. 2, "thou hast." ³ Job xi. 17.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

How God suffereth them that He chooseth for to be teased and tempted; and afterward He comforteth them and stableth them in grace.

AND also in comfort of such men, that they should not despair in temptation, the Wise Man saith thus of our Lord. *In tentatione ambulat cum eo. In primis eligit eum. Timorem, et metum, et approbationem inducet super illum; et cruciabit illum in tribulatione doctrinae suae, donec tentet illum in cogitationibus suis, et credat animae illius. Et iter directum adducet ad illum, et firmabit illum, et laetificabit illum; et denudabit abscondita sua illi, et thesaurizabit super illum scientiam et intellectum justitiae.*¹ This is thus mickle for to say : The Wise Man, for he would that no man should despair in temptation, in comfort of them he saith thus : In temptation our Lord forsaketh not a man, but He goeth with him from the beginning into the last ending, for he saith, first He chooseth him, and that is when He draweth a man to Him by comfort of devotion ; and afterward sorrow and dread and

¹ Ecclus. iv. 18-21.

assaying He bringeth upon him, and that is when He withdraweth devotion and suffereth him to be tempted. Also he saith He tormenteth in tribulation, until He hath well assayed him in His thoughts, and until a man will put all his trust in Him fully. And then after this our Lord bringeth Him out into the right way and fasteneth him to Him, and gladdeth him, and then showeth him His privities, and giveth him His treasure of knowing and understanding of righteousness.

By these words of Holy Writ might thou see that these temptations, or any other, be they never so ugly to a man that by grace is in full will for to forsake sin, are speedful and profitable, if he will suffer as he may and abide God's will, and not turn again to sins which he hath forsaken for no sorrow nor pain nor dread of such temptation, but aye standeth still in travail, and in prayer with good hope. Our Lord of His endless goodness, having pity and mercy over all His creatures, when He seeth time He layeth to His hand, and smiteth down the devil and all his power; and easeth them of their travail, and putteth away dreads and sorrows and darkness out of their hearts and bringeth into their souls light of grace, and openeth the sight of the soul for to see that all the travail that they had, it was speedful to them, giving to them also a new ghostly might to withstand all the efforts of the fiend and all deadly sins without great travail,

and leadeth them into a soberness of good virtuous living. In the which, if they be meek, He keepeth them unto the last end, and then taketh He them all wholly to Him. This thing I say to thee, if thou be teased or travailed with any such manner temptations, be not too mickle adread, but do as I have said, and better if thou might ; and I hope by the grace of Jhesu Christ thou shalt never be overcome by thine enemy.

CHAPTER FORTY

That a man should not give him to idleness nor lightly leave the grace that is given him of God.

AFTER this, when thou are escaped such temptations, or else our Lord hath so kept thee, as He hath many of His mercy, that thou hast not been mickle teased with none such, then it is good to thee that thou turn not thy rest unto idleness ; for there is many a man that taketh rest upon him too soon. But thou shalt, if thou wilt, begin a new game and a new travail ; and that is for to enter within into thine own soul by meditation, for to know what it is, and by the knowing thereof come to the ghostly knowing of God. For Saint Austin saith : By the knowing of myself, I shall get the knowing of God. I say not that it is needful to thee and due for to travail so, nor to none other man, but he feel him stirred by grace as if he were called thereto. For our Lord giveth sundry gifts where so He will, not one man all, nor all men one ; save charity which is common to all men. And therefore, if a man or a woman have received one gift of God, as devotion of prayer or in the

passion of Christ, or any other be it never so little, leave it not too soon for none other, but he feeleth soothfastly a better ; but hold that he hath, and travail therein stably, aye desiring a better when God will give it. Nevertheless afterward if that be withdrawn somewhat, and he seeth a better and feeleth his heart stirred thereto, then seemeth it a calling of our Lord to the better, and then is time that he follow after for to get it, and fulfill it as mickle as he may.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

That a man should know the measure of his gift, and ever desire a better, and take it when God will give it.

OUR holy fathers here-before taught us that we should know the measure of our gift, and upon that work; not taking upon us by feigning more than we have in feeling. We may aye desire the best, but we may not aye work the best, for we have not yet received that grace. An hound that runneth after the hare, only for he seeth other hounds run, when he is weary he resteth him or turneth home again. But if he run for he seeth the hare, he will not spare for weariness till he hath gotten it. Right so it is ghostly, who so have a grace, be it never so little, and he leave wilfully the working thereof, and maketh himself for to travail on any other which he hath not yet, only for he seeth or heareth that other men did so, soothly he may run a while till he be weary, and then shall he turn home again, and but if he be wary, he may hurt his feet by some fantasies, or than he come home. But he that worketh in such grace as he hath, and desireth by prayer meekly and lastingly after more, and

after feeleth his heart stirred for to follow the grace which he desired, he may securely run if he keep meekness. And therefore desire of God as mickle as thou might, without measure or discretion, of all that that belongeth to His love, or to the bliss of heaven ; for who so can best desire of God, most shall feel of Him. But work as thou may, and cry God mercy for that that thou may not.¹ Thus it seemeth Saint Paul said : *Unusquisque habet donum suum ex Deo, alius autem sic, alius vero sic. Item unicuique nostrum data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi. Divisiones gratiarum sunt, alii datur sermo sapientiae ; alii sermo scientiae. Item ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis.*² Saint Paul saith, that each man hath his gift of God, one thus, and another thus. For to each man that shall be saved is given a grace after the measure of Christ's gift. And therefore it is speedful that we know the gifts which are given us of God, that we might work in them, for by those we shall be saved ; as some by bodily works and deeds of mercy, some by great bodily penance, some by sorrow and weeping for their sins all their lifetime, some by preaching and teaching, some by diverse graces and gifts of devotion shall be saved and come to bliss.

¹ MS. 2, "fulfyller in thy worchyng of this desyre."

² 1 Cor. vii. 7 ; Eph. iv. 7 ; 1 Cor. xii. 4, 8 ; 1 Cor. ii. 12.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

That a man should travail to know his own soul and the mightes of it, and break down the ground of sin therein.

NEVERTHELESS, there is a work which is meedful and speedful for to travail in [and I expect an high plain way, as mickle as may be in man's work, to contemplation].¹ And that is a man for to enter into himself, for to know his own soul and the mights thereof, the fairness and the foulness of it. In this inward beholding, thou shalt come to see the worship and the dignity which it should have by kind of the first making, and thou shalt see the wretchedness and the mischief which thou art fallen in for sin. And of this sight shall come a desire with great longing in thine heart for to recover again that dignity and worship which thou hast lost. Also thou shalt feel a loathing and a grisling of thyself, with a great will for to destroy and bear down thyself and all things that letteth thee from that dignity and joy.² This is a ghostly travail hard

¹ Inserted in MS. 1, not in MS. 2. Included in text of MSS. 3, 4, and 10.

² MS. 9, "dignite and clenenes."

and sharp in the beginning, who so will quickly travail therein, for it is a travail in the soul against the ground of all sins little and mickle, which ground is nought else but a false misruled love of a man to himself. Out of this love, as Saint Austin saith, springeth all manner of sin deadly and venial; and soothly until this ground be well ransacked, and deep delved and as it were near dried up by outcasting of all fleshly and worldly loves and dreads¹ a soul may never feel ghostly the burning love of Jhesu Christ² nor have [homeliness of his gracious presence nor]³ clear sight of ghostly things by light of understanding. This is the travail that a man behoveth, to draw out his heart and his mind from the fleshly love [and the liking]⁴ of all earthly creatures, from vain thoughts and from fleshly imaginations, and out from the love and the [vicious]⁵ feeling of himself, that his soul should find no rest in no fleshly thought, nor earthly affection;⁶ then in as mickle as the soul may not find⁷ his ghostly rest in the love and⁸ the sight of Jhesu Christ⁹ [it behoveth need suffer

¹ MS. 2, "lusts and luves."

² MSS. 4, 5, and 10, "God."

³ Not in MSS. 4, 5, and 10.

⁴ Not in MS. 9.

⁵ Not in MSS. 6, 9, and 10.

⁶ MS. 7, "and if he do this."

⁷ MSS. 7 and 9, "finden readily."

⁸ MS. 9, "in the homely presence and."

⁹ MSS. 4, 6, 7, and 10, "God."

pain¹] This travail is some deal strait and narrow, and nevertheless I expect it is the way which Christ teacheth to them that would be His perfect lovers² in the gospel, saying thus : *Contendite intrare per angustam portam ; quam arcta est via quae ducit ad vitam, et pauci inveniunt eam.* Strive therefore to enter by a strait gate, for the way that leadeth to heaven is narrow, and few men find.³ And how strait this way is, our Lord telleth in another place thus : *Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me. Item qui odit animam suam in hoc mundo, in vitam aeternam custodit eam.* That is for to say : Whoso will come after Me, forsake himself and hate his own soul. That is for to say forsake all fleshly love and hate his own fleshly life and vain liking⁴ of all his bodily wits for love of Me ;⁵ and take the cross, that is to say suffer the pain of this world awhile, and then he follows Me [that is to say into contemplation of My manhood, and of My Godhead].⁶ ⁷ This is a strait way and a narrow,

¹ MS. 10 omits. MSS. 2 and 9, "it schal nedlynges fele peyne."

² MSS. 2, 6, 9, and 10, "folweres."

³ Luke xiii. 24 ; Matt. vii. 14.

⁴ MSS. 2, 6, and 10, "bodily felynge."

⁵ MS. 6, "of God."

⁶ Interlined. Not in MS. 6. MS. 10, "into contemplacion of me."

⁷ Matt. xvi. 24 ; John xii. 25.

that no bodily thing may pass through it, for it is a slaying of all sin, as Saint Paul saith : *Mortificate membra vestra, quae sunt super terram, immunditiam, libidinem, concupiscentiam malam.* Slay your members upon earth ; not the members of the body, but of the soul, as uncleanness, lust, and unreasonable love to yourself and to earthly things.¹ Therefore as thy travail hath been herebefore for to withstand great bodily sins and open temptations of the enemy, as it were from without : right so thee behoveth now in this ghostly work within thyself, for to destroy and break the ground of sin in thyself, all so mickle as thou mayst. And that thou mightest the more readily bring it about, I shall tell thee as me thinketh.

¹ Col. iii. 5.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

How a man shall know the worthiness and the worship of his soul that it had first of God, and the wretchedness and the mischief that it is fallen in for sin.

THE soul of a man is a life, made of three mights, mind, reason, and will ; to the image, and the likeness of the blessed Trinity, whole, perfect, and righteous. In as mickle as the mind was made mighty and steadfast, by virtue of the Father Almighty, for to hold him without forgetting, distracting, or letting of any creature, and so it hath likeness of the Father. Reason was made clear and bright without error or murkness, as perfectly as a soul in a body unglorified might have ; and so it hath the likeness of the Son, which is endless Wisdom. And the love and the will was made clean, burning into God without beastly love¹ of the flesh or of any creature, by the sovereign goodness of God the Holy Ghost, and so it hath the likeness of the Holy Ghost, the which is blessed Love. So that a man's soul, which may be called a made trinity, was fulfilled in mind, sight, and love, of the unmade blessed

¹ MS. 9, "lust."

Trinity which is our Lord. This is the dignity, the state and the worship of a man's soul, by kind of the first making. This state haddest thou in Adam, before the first sin of man; but when Adam sinned, choosing love and delight in himself and in creatures, he lost all his worship and his dignity and thou also in him, and fell from that blessed trinity into a foul murk wretched trinity, that is into forgetting of God and unknowing of Him [and into a beastly liking of him]¹ self, and that reasonably. For as David saith in the psalter, *Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit; comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis*. A man when he was in worship he knew it not, and therefore he lost it, and was like to a beast.² See now then the wretchedness of thy soul; for as thy mind was some time stable in God, right so it hath now forgotten Him, and seeketh its rest in creatures now from one to another, and never may find full rest, for it hath lost Him in whom is full rest. And right so it is of reason. And the love also which was clean in ghostly savour and sweetness, now it is turned into a foul beastly lust and liking, in itself and in creatures and fleshly savours; both in thy wits, as in gluttony and in lechery, and in imagining, as in pride, vainglory and covetise. In so mickle that thou mightest hardly do any good deed, but if thou be defouled

¹ Not in MS. 2.² Psa. xlix. 20.

with vain glory ; nor thou might not well use none of thy five wits cleanly in any creature delectable, but if thine heart be taken and inflamed with a vain lust and liking of it, which putteth out the love of God from the heart as in feeling and in ghostly savour, that it may not come therein. Every man that liveth in spirit knoweth well all this. This is the wretchedness of the soul and the mischief for the first sin of man, without all other wretchednesses and sins which thou has wilfully put thereto. And wit thou well, though thou haddest never done sin with thy body venial nor deadly, but only this that is called original, for it is the first sin, and that is nought else but losing of thy righteousness which thou wast made in, should thou never have been saved if our Lord Jhesu Christ by His precious passion had not delivered thee and restored thee again.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

How every man may be saved by the passion of Christ, be he never so sinful, if he ask it.

AND therefore if thou think that I have herebefore spoken too high to thee, for thou mightest not take it nor fulfill it as I have said or shall say, I will now fall down to thee as low as thou wilt, for my profit as well as for thine. Then say I thus, that though thou be never so mickle a wretch, hast thou done never so mickle sin, forsake thyself and all thy works good and bad, cry mercy and ask only salvation by virtue of this precious passion meekly and trustily, and without doubt thou shalt have it. And from this original sin and all other,¹ thou shalt be saved ; yea, and thou shalt be saved as an anker enclosed, and not only thou, but all Christian souls which trust upon this passion and meek themselves, acknowledging their wretchedness, asking mercy and forgiveness, and the fruit of this precious passion only, lowing themselves to the sacraments of Holy Kirk. Though it be so that they have been encumbered with sin all

¹ MS. 9, "that thou hast don."

their lifetime and never had feeling of ghostly savour or sweetness, or ghostly knowing of God, they shall in this faith and in their good will by virtue of this precious passion of our Lord Jhesu Christ, be saved and come to the bliss of heaven. All this knowest thou well, but yet it liketh me for to say it. See here the endless mercy of our Lord, how low He falleth to thee and to me and all sinful caitiffs ; then ask mercy, and have it. Thus said the prophet in the person of our Lord : *Omnis enim qui invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit.* Every man, what that he be, call the name of God, that is to say ask salvation by Jhesu and by His passion, and he shall be saved.¹ But this courtesy of our Lord some men take well, and be saved thereby, and some men in trust of this mercy and this courtesy be still in their sin and ween for to have it when them list. And then may they not, for they are taken or they wit, and so they damn themselves.

²But then sayest thou : “ If this be sooth, then wonder I greatly for that I find written in some holy men’s books. Some say as I understand that he that cannot love this blessed name Jhesu, nor find nor feel in it ghostly joy and delectable, with wonderful sweetness in this life

¹ Joel ii. 32.

² This passage, to end of chapter, has been interpolated by another hand in MS. 1. It is not found in MSS. 2, 3, and 5, but forms part of text in MSS. 4, 7, and 10.

here, from the sovereign joy and ghostly sweetness in the bliss of heaven he shall be alien, and never shall he come thereto. Soothly these words when I them read astound me, and make me greatly afeared; for I hope as thou sayest that many by the mercy of our Lord shall be saved by keeping of His commandments and by very repentance for their evil living before done, the which felt never ghostly sweetness nor inly savour in the name of Jhesu or in the love of Jhesu. And therefore I marvel me the more that they say contrary hereto as it seemeth." As unto this I may say as me thinketh, that their saying if it be well understood is sooth, and is not contrary to that that I have said. For this name Jhesu is nought else for to say upon English, but healer or health. Now every man that liveth in this wretched life is ghostly sick, for there is no man that liveth without sin, the which is ghostly sickness; as Saint John saith of himself and of other perfect men thus: *Si dixerimus quia peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est*. If we say that we have no sin, we beguile ourselves and there is no soothfastness in us.¹ And therefore he may never come to the joy of heaven until he be first made whole of this ghostly sickness. But this ghostly health may no man have that hath use of reason, but if he desire it and love it, and have

¹ 1 John i. 8.

delight therein, in as mickle as he hopeth for to get it. Now the name of Jhesu is nothing else but this ghostly health ; wherefore it is sooth that they say that there may no man be saved but if he love and like in the name of Jhesu, for there may no man be ghostly whole but if he love and desire ghostly health. For right as if a man were bodily sick, there were none earthly thing so dear nor so needful to him, nor so mickle should be desired of him as bodily health, for though thou wouldest give him all the riches and worship of this world and not make him whole if thou mightest, thou pleasest him not. Right so it is to a man that is sick ghostly and feeleth the pain of ghostly sickness. Nothing is so dear nor so needful, nor so mickle coveted of him, as is ghostly health ; and that is Jhesu, without which all the joys of heaven may not like him.

And this is the reason, as I expect, why our Lord when He took mankind for our salvation, He would not be called by none other name, that betokened His endless being or His might or His wisdom or His righteousness : but only by that that betokened the cause of His coming and was salvation of man's soul ; which salvation was most dear and most needful to man. And this salvation betokeneth this name Jhesu. Then by this it seemeth sooth that there shall no man be saved, but if he love Jhesu ; for there may no man be saved but if he love salvation only, for

to have it through the mercy of our Lord Jhesu and by the merits of His passion. Which love he may have that liveth and dieth in the lowest degree of charity. Also I may say on that other part, that he that cannot love this blessed name Jhesu with ghostly mirth, nor enjoy in it with heavenly melody here, he shall never have nor feel in heaven that fullhead of sovereign joy the which he that might in this life by abundance of perfect charity enjoy in Jhesu shall feel and have : and so may their saying be understood. Nevertheless he shall be saved and have full meed in the sight of God, if he in this life be in the lowest degree of charity by keeping of God's commandments ; for our Lord saith Himself thus : *In domo patris mei multae mansiones sunt.* In My Father's house are many sundry dwellings.¹ Some are for perfect souls, the which in this life were fulfilled of charity and grace of the Holy Ghost and sung praisings to God in contemplation of Him, with wonderful sweetness and heavenly savour. These souls, for they had most charity, shall have highest meed in the bliss of heaven ; for these are called God's darlings. Other souls that are not disposed to contemplation of God, nor had not the fullhead of charity as apostles or martyrs had in the beginning of Holy Church, shall have the lower meed in the bliss of heaven ; for these are called God's friends. Thus calleth our

¹ John xiv. 2.

Lord in Holy Writ chosen souls saying thus : *Comedite, amici, et inebriamini, carissimi*. My friends, eat ye : and my darlings, be ye drunken.¹ As if our Lord said thus : Ye that are My friends, for ye kept My commandments and set My love before the love of this world, and loved Me more than any earthly thing, ye shall be fed with ghostly food of the bread of life. But ye that are My darlings, that not only kept My commandments, but also of your own freewill fulfilled My counsels, and over that ye loved Me only and entirely with all the might of your soul and burned in My love with ghostly delight, as did principally the apostles and martyrs and all other souls that might by grace come to the gift of perfection : ye shall be made drunken with the highest and freshest wine in my cellar, that is the sovereign joy of love in the bliss of heaven.²

¹ Cant. v. 1.

² End of interpolated passage.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

That a man should be busy to recover again his worthiness, and reform again in him the image of the Trinity.

NEVERTHELESS though this be sooth of the endless mercy of God unto thee and to me and to all mankind, we should not therefore in trust of this be the more reckless wilfully in our living, but the more busy for to please Him ; namely now since we are restored again in hope by the passion of our Lord to the dignity and the bliss which we had lost by Adam's sin. And though we might never get it here, yet we should desire that we might recover here living a figure and a likeness of that dignity, that our soul might be reformed as it were in a shadow by grace, to the image of the Trinity which we had by kind and after shall have fully in bliss. For that is the life which is verily contemplative unto beginning here in that feeling of love and ghostly knowing of God by opening of the ghostly eye, which shall never be lost nor be taken away, but the same shall be fulfilled otherwise in the bliss of heaven. This behight our Lord to Marie Magdalene, which was contemplative ; and said thus of her : *Maria*

optimam partem elegit, quae non auferetur ab ea : that Marie had chosen the best party, that is the love of God in contemplation, for it shall never be taken away from her.¹ I say not that thou mayest here living recover so whole nor so perfect cleanness and innocence, knowing and loving of God, as thou haddest first, nor as thou shalt have ; nor thou mayest not escape all the wretchednesses and the pains of sin, nor thou living in deadly flesh mayest destroy and quench all wholly the false vain love in thyself, nor flee all venial sins, nor that they will not, but if they be stopped by great fervour of charity, alway spring out of thine heart as water doth from a stinking well. But I would that if thou mightest not fully quench it, that thou mightest somewhat slake it and come to the cleanness of soul as near as thou mightest. For our Lord behight the children of Israel when He led them into the land of behest, and in a figure of them to all Christian men thus : *Omnis locus, quem calcaverit pes tuus tuum erit.* That is for to say, as mickle land as thou mayest tread upon with thy foot of very desire, so mickle shalt thou have in the land of behest, that is in the bliss of heaven when thou comest thither.²

¹ Luke x. 42.

² Deut. xi. 24.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

How Jhesu shall be sought, desired, and found.

SEEK then that thou hast lost, that thou might find it. Well I wot, whoso might once have an inward sight a little of that dignity and that ghostly fairness which a soul had by kind and shall have by grace, he should loathe and despise all the bliss, the liking and fairness of all this world as stink of a carrion ; and he should never have will for to do other deed but night and day, saving the frailty and the bare need of the bodily kind, desiring, mourning, praying, and seeking how he might come again thereto. Nevertheless forasmuch as thou hast not yet seen what it is fully, for thy ghostly eye is not yet opened, I shall tell one word for all which thou shalt seek, desire and find, for in that word is all that thou hast lost. This word is Jhesu. I mean not ¹ this word Jhesu painted upon the wall, or written with letters on the book, or formed by lips in sound of the mouth, nor feigned in thine heart by travail of thy mind ; for on this manner-wise, may a man out of charity find Him. But I mean

¹ MS. 9, "not onlie."

Jhesu [Christ, that blessed Person, God and man, son of Virgin Marie, whom this name betokeneth ; that is]¹ all goodness, endless wisdom love and sweetness, thy joy, thy worship, and thine everlasting bliss, thy God, thy Lord, and thy salvation.

Then if it be so, that thou feelest a great desire in thine heart to Jhesu, either by mind of this name Jhesu, or by mind and seeing of any other word, or in prayer or in any deed that thou dost, which desire is so mickle that it putteth out as it were by strength all other thoughts and desires of the world and of the flesh, that they may not rest in thine heart, then seekest thou well thy Lord Jhesu. And when thou feelest this desire to God, to Jhesu—all is one—helped and comforted by a ghostly might in so mickle that it is turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and sweetness, into light and knowing of soothfastness so mickle that for the time the point of thy thought is set upon nothing that is made, nor it feeleth no stirring of vain glory, nor of itself neither, nor none other evil affection, for they may not appear that time, but only is enclosed, rested, softened, anointed in Jhesu, then hast thou found somewhat of Jhesu. Not Him as He is, but a shadow of Him ; for the better that thou findest, the more shalt thou desire Him. Then by what manner prayer or meditation or occupation that

¹ Interpolated in MS. 1. In texts of MSS. 2, 8, and 9. Not in MSS. 3, 4, 7, and 10.

thou mayest have greatest and cleanest desire to Him and have most feeling of Him by that occupation, thou seekest Him best and best findest Him. Therefore if it come to thy mind as it were, asking what hast thou lost and what seekest thou, lift up [thy mind in]¹ the desire of thine heart to Jhesu Christ,² though thou be blind and nought mayest see of His Godhead ; and say that Him hast thou lost and Him wilt thou have, and nothing but Him [to be with Him where He is]³ ; none other joy, none other bliss in heaven nor in earth, but Him. And though it be so that thou feel Him in devotion or in knowing, or in any other gift what that it be, rest not therein as though thou haddest fully found Jhesu ; but forget that thou hast found, and aye be desiring after Jhesu more and more for to find Him better, as thou haddest right nought found Him. For wit thou well, what that thou feelest of Him, be it never so mickle, yea ! though thou wert ravished into the third heaven with Paul, yet hast thou not found Jhesu as He is in His joy. Know thou or feel thou never so mickle of Him, He is yet above it. And therefore if thou wilt fulfind Him as He is in the bliss of loving, cease never while thou livest of ghostly desiring.

¹ Not in MS. 10.

² MS. 9, "thy Lord Jhesu Crist that blessed Maydens sone."

³ Not in MSS. 4, and 10.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

What profit it is to have the desire of Jhesu.

SOOTHLY I had liefer feel and have a soothfast desire and a clean ¹ in mine heart to my Lord Jhesu Christ, though I see right little of Him with my ghostly eye, than for to have without this desire all bodily penance of all men living, or visions or revelations of angels appearing, songs and sounds, savours and smells, burnings and any pleasing bodily feeling, and shortly for to say, or all the joy of heaven and of earth which I might have without this desire to my Lord Jhesu. David the prophet felt as I say, as I understand, when he said thus : *Qui enim michi est in caelo ? et a te quid volui super terram ?* Lord, what thing is to me in heaven, or what would I, without thee above earth ? ² As if he had said thus : Lord Jhesu, what heavenly joy is liking to me, without desire of Thee whilst I am in earth, or without love of Thee when I am come to heaven ? As who saith, Right none ! Then if thou wouldest feel anything of Him bodily or ghostly, covet not but for to feel soothfastly a desire of His grace and of His merciful presence that thee thinketh that

¹ MS. 2, "clene loue-longynge."

² Psa. lxxiii. 25.

thine heart may find none other rest in nothing but in Him. Thus coveted David when he said thus : *Concupivit anima mea desiderare justificationes tuas in omni tempore.* Lord, my soul coveted the desire of thy righteousness.¹ Seek then as David did desire by desire ; and if thou may feel by thy desire [in prayers and in meditations the homely presence of Jhesu Christ in thy soul]² bind thine heart fast thereto, that thou fall not therefrom, and if thou stumble that thou mayst soon find Him again. Seek then Jhesu, which thou hast lost ; He will be sought, and He may somewhat be found, for He saith Himself : *Omnis qui quaerit, invenit.* Ilk a man that seeketh shall find.³ The seeking is travailous, but the finding is blissful. Do therefore after the counsel of the Wise Man, if thou wilt find him : *Si quaesieris quasi pecuniam sapientiam, et sicut thesauros effoderis illam ; tunc intelliges timorem Domini, et scientiam Dei invenies.* If thou seek wisdom, the which is Jhesu, as silver and gold, and delvest deep thereafter, thou shalt find it.⁴ Thee behoveth for to delve deep in thine heart, for therein He is hid, and cast out full cleanly all loves and likings, sorrows and dreads of all earthly things ; and so shalt thou find Wisdom, Jhesu.⁵

¹ Psa. cxix. 20.

² Interpolated in MS. 1. In text of MSS. 2 and 8. Not in MSS. 3, 4, 6, 7, and 10. ³ Matt. vii. 8. ⁴ Prov. ii. 4, 5.

⁵ MS. 2, adds " that is thi love I hope and thi Lord."

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Where and wherewith Jhesu shall be sought and found.

BE thou then like to the woman of the gospel, of which our Lord saith thus : *Quae mulier habens drachmas decem, si perdiderit unam, nonne accendit lucernam, et everrit domum suam et quaerit diligenter, donec inveniat eam ? Et cum invenerit, convocat amicos suos, dicens ; Congratulamini mihi, quia inveni drachmam, quam perdideram.* What woman is there which hath lost a drachma, that she will not light a lantern and casten her house up-so-down and seek it till she find it ? As whoso saith, none. And when she hath found it she calleth her friends to her, and saith to them thus : Make mirth with me and melody, for I have found the drachma that I had lost.¹ This drachma is Jhesu, which thou hast lost ; if thou wilt finden Him, light up a lantern, the which is God's Word, as David saith : *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum.* Lord, Thy Word to my feet is a lantern.² By this lantern shalt thou see where He is, and how thou shalt find Him ; and if thou wilt, thou mayest light up

¹ Luke xv. 8, 9.

² Psa. cxix. 105.

another lantern, that is the reason of thy soul, for also our Lord saith : *Lucerna corporis tui est oculus tuus*. Lantern of thy body is thy bodily eye.¹ Right so it may be i-said that the lantern of the soul is reason, by the which the soul may see all ghostly things. By this lantern mayest thou find Jhesu, and that is sooth if thou hold the lantern up from underneath the bushel, as our Lord saith : *Nemo accendit lucernam et ponit eam sub modio, sed super candelabrum, etc.* There is no man that lighteth a lantern for to set it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick ; ² that is to say thy reason shall not be overlaid with earthly business, vain thoughts, and fleshly affections, but aye upward above all earthly things, as mickle as thou mayest [into inward beholding of Jhesu Christ]³ ; and if thou do so, thou shalt see all the dust, the filth and the small moles in thine house [for why, He is light],³ that is to say all the fleshly loves and dreads in thy soul. Not all, for as David saith : *Delicta quis intelligit ?* Who may know all his trespass ?⁴ As whoso saith., no man. And thou shalt cast out of thine heart all such sins, and sweep thy soul clean with a besom of dread of God, and with water of thine eye wash it ; and so shalt thou find thy drachma Jhesu. He is drachma, He is penny, and He is

¹ Matt. vi. 22.

² Matt. v. 15.

³ Interlined in MS. 1. In text of MSS. 2 and 9. Omitted from MSS. 4 and 10.

⁴ Psa. xix. 12.

thine heritage. This drachma will not so lightly be found as it may be said ; for this work is not of one hour nor of a day, but many days and years with mickle sweat and swink of the body and travail of the soul. And if thou cease not ; but seek busily, sorrow and sigh deep, mourn still, and stoop low till thine eye water for anguish and for pain, for thou hast lost thy treasure Jhesu [at last when that He will, well shalt thou find thy drachma Jhesu].¹ And if thou find Him as I have said [that is if thou may in cleanness² of conscience feel the homely and the peaceful presence of that blessed man, Jhesu Christ]³ as a shadow or glimmering of Him, thou mayest if thou wilt call thy friends to thee for to make mirth with thee and melody, for thou hast found thy drachma Jhesu.

¹ Not in MS. 10.

² MS. 9, "clerenes and clenness."

³ Not in MS. 10. MS. 9, reads "the hoomli and the peesful presence of Jhesu Christ mercifulli schewande hym to the face of thi soule as."

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

Where Jhesu is lost, and found again through His mercy.

SEE now then the courtesy and the mercy of Jhesu. Thou hast lost Him, but where? Soothly in thine house, that is in thy soul. If thou haddest lost Him out of thine house, that is to say, if thou haddest lost all the reason of thy soul by the first sin, thy soul should never have found Him again; but He left to thee reason, and so He is in thy soul and never shall be lost out of it. Nevertheless, thou art never the nearer to Him till thou hast found Him. He is in thee, though He be lost from thee; but thou art not in Him till thou hast found Him. Then was this His mercy, that He would suffer Him be lost only there as He may be found. It needeth not run to Rome nor to Jerusalem for to seek Him there. But turn thy thought in thine own soul, where He is hid, as the prophet saith: *Vere tu es Deus absconditus*: Soothly Lord, Thou art an hid God,¹ and seek Him there. Thus He saith Himself in the gospel. *Simile est regnum caelorum thesauro abscondito in agro; quem qui invenit homo, prae*

¹ Isa. xlv. 15.

gaudio illius vadit, et vendit universa quae habet, et emit agrum illum. The kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure hid in a field, which, when a man findeth, for joy of it he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that ilk field.¹ Jhesu is treasure hid in thy soul ; then if thou mightest find Him in thy soul, and thy soul in Him, I am sure for joy thou wouldest give all the liking of all earthly things for to have it. Jhesu sleepeth in thine heart ghostly, as He did sometime bodily, when He was in the ship with His disciples, but they for dread of perishing wakened Him and hastily He saved them from the tempest. Do thou so stir Him by prayer and waken Him by great crying of desire, and He shall soon arise and help thee.

¹ Matt. xiii. 44.

CHAPTER FIFTY

What letteth a man to hear and see Jhesu within himself,

NEVERTHELESS I expect better, that thou sleepest oftener when thou shouldest call to Him, than He to thee ; for He calleth thee well often with His sweet privy voice and stirreth thine heart full stilly, that thou shouldest leave all other jangling of worldly vanities in thy soul and only take care of Him for to hear Him speak. Thus saith David of our Lord : *Audi, filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam, et obliviscere populum tuum, et domum patris tui.* Oh daughter, hear and see and bow thine ear to me, and forget the folk of thy worldly thoughts and the house of thy fleshly and kindly affections.¹ Lo ! here may thou see how our Lord calleth thee and all other which will hearken to Him. What letteth thee then, that thou mayest neither see Him nor hear Him ? Soothly there is so mickle din and crying in thine heart of vain thoughts and fleshly desires that thou mayest neither hear Him nor see Him ; therefore put away unrestful din and break the

¹ Psa. xlv. 10.

love of sin and of vanity, and bring in thine heart love of virtues and full charity, and then shalt thou hear thy Lord speak to thee. For as long as He findeth not His image reformed in thee, He is strange and far from thee.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

That meekness and charity are specially the livery of Jhesu, through the which man's soul is reformed to the likeness of Him.

THEREFORE shape thee for to be arrayed in His likeness, that is in meekness and charity, which is His livery, and then will He homely know thee and show to thee His privity. Thus said He Himself to His disciples : *Qui diligit me, diligetur a Patre meo, et manifestabo ei meipsum.* Whoso love Me, he shall be loved of My Father, and I shall show Myself unto him.¹ There is no virtue nor work that thou mayest do may make thee like to our Lord, without meekness and charity ; for these two are specially God's livery.² And that seemeth well in the gospel, where our Lord speaketh of meekness : *Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde.* Learn of Me, He saith, not for to go barefoot nor for to go in desert and fast forty days, nor for to choose you disciples, but learn of Me meekness, for I am mild and meek in heart.³ Also of charity He saith thus :

¹ John xiv. 21.

² MS. 2, "ben to God specially most luf."

³ Matt. xi. 29.

Hoc est preceptum meum : Ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos. Item in hoc cognoscent homines quia discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem. This is in bidding, that ye love you together, as I loved you ; for in that shall men know you for My disciples.¹ Not for ye work miracles or cast out devils, or preach and teach, but ilk of you love other in charity. [If thou wilt be like to Him, have meekness and charity].² That charity is, that thou couldest love well thine even-christian.³

¹ John xiii. 34, 35.

² Not in MS. 9.

³ MS. 2. "Charite is that thow coutheeste wel loue thin even-cristen as thi self."

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

How a man shall see the ground of sin within himself.

NOW hast thou heard a little what thy soul is, and what worship it had, and how it lost it; and also I have told thee that this worship, by grace and busy travail, somewhat be recovered again in part of feeling. Now shall I tell thee feebly as I can how thou shalt be able to enter into thyself, for to see the ground of sin and for to destroy it as mickle as thou mayest, and so shalt thou be able to recover a part of thy dignity. Thou shalt cease for a time of all bodily works, from outward business as thou mayest well. Then shalt thou draw into thyself thy thought from thy bodily wits, that thou take no heed what thou hearest or seest or feelest; so that the point of thine heart be not fixed in them. After this draw inner thy thought from all imagining, if thou mayest, of any bodily things, and out from all thoughts of thy bodily deeds before done, or of other men's deeds. This is little mastery for to do when thou hast devotion; but thou shalt do thus as I say when thou hast no devotion, for then it is mickle the harder. And set thine

intent and thy purpose [upon thy Lord Jhesu]¹ as thou wouldest nought seek, nor feel, nor find, but only [the grace and the ghostly presence of]¹ Jhesu.² This is travaillous, for vain thoughts will press into thine heart thick, for to draw thy thought down to them. [But thou shalt through stable mind of Jhesu Christ ³ against-stand]¹ and if thou do thus thou shalt find somewhat; not Jhesu whom thou seekest [but only a naked mind of His name].¹ What then? soothly right nought but a murk image and a painful of thine own soul, which hath neither light of knowing nor feeling of love nor liking. This image if thou behold it wittily, is all belapped with black stinking clothes of sin, as pride, envy, ire, accidie, covetise, gluttony and lechery.

¹ Not in MSS. 4 and 10.

² MS. 9 has "the grace and the presence and the techyng and the comfort of the Lord Jhesu Crist."

³ MS. 9. "With bisynes in praier."

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

Unto what thing the image of sin is like, and what it is in itself.

THIS is not the image of Jhesu, but it is an image of sin ; as Saint Paul calleth it, a body of sin and a body of death. This image and this black shadow thou bearest about with thee where thou goest. Out from this spring many great streams of sin, and small also. Right as out of the image of Jhesu, if it were reformed in the beams of ghostly light, should sty up into heaven as burning desires, clean affections, wise thoughts and all honesty of virtues ; right so out of this image spring stirrings of pride, of envy and such other, the which cast thee down from the honesty of man into a beast's likeness. But peradventure thou beginnest for to think what thing this image should be like ; and therefore that thou shouldest not long study thereabout, I tell thee it is like no bodily thing. What is it then ? sayest thou. Soothly it is nought, and that mayest thou find if thou wilt assay as I have said to thee. Draw into thyself thy thought from all bodily things, and then shalt thou find right nought wherein thy soul may rest. This nought is nought else

but darkness of conscience, a lacking of love and of light ; as sin is nought but a wanting of God.

If it so were that the ground of sin were mickle abated and dried up in thee, and thy soul were reformed rightly to the image of Jhesu, then if thou drew into thyself thy heart thou shouldest not find nought, but thou shouldest find Jhesu ; not only the naked mind of His name, but thou shouldest find Jhesu Christ in thy conscience readily teaching thee. Thou shouldest find light of understanding by Him, and no murkness of uncunning ; thou shouldest find love and liking of Him, and no pain of bitterness and biting. But for thou art not yet reformed, therefore when thy soul cometh in from all bodily thing, and findeth nought but murkness and heaviness, him thinketh a hundred winters till he be out again by some bodily delight or vain thought. And that is no wonder ; for who so came home to his house and found nothing therein but stinking smoke and a chiding wife, he would soon run out of it. Right so thy soul, when it findeth no comfort in thyself but black reek of ghostly blindness and great chiding of fleshly thoughts crying upon thee, that thou mayest be in no peace, soothly it is soon irked till it be out again. This is murkness of thy conscience, which I spake of, and thy image.¹

¹ MS. 9. "This mirknes is that ilke nought the whilk I spake of on the ymage."

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

Whoso will find Jhesu, him behoveth abide and travail in this ghostly murkness of this image of sin.

NEVERTHELESS in this dark conscience ¹ behoveth thee to swink and sweat ; that is to say thee behoveth draw in thy thought from all bodily things as mickle as thou mayest. And then, when thou findest right nought but sorrow and pain and blindness [in this murkness] ² if thou wilt find Jhesu the pain of this dark conscience thee behoveth suffer, and abide awhile therein.³ [And here thee behoveth to be wary that thou take Jhesu Christ in thy mind, and think stiffly on His passion and on His meekness, and through might of Him thou shalt arise in thy thought against this ilk murkness, by fervent desire to God ; not setting the point of thy thought in that ilk nought, but in Jhesu Christ which thou desirest, as thou wouldest bear it down, and go through it. Thou shalt dread and loathe this murkness and this nought right as the devil of

¹ MSS. 4, 9, and 10, "this nought."

² Not in MSS. 4, 9, and 10.

³ MS 10, "abyde in this mirknes of this nought."

hell, and thou shalt despise it and all to-burst it ; for all within this nought is Jhesu hid in his joy, whom thou mayest not find by thy seeking, but if thou pass through the murkness of thy conscience].¹ This is the ghostly travail that I spake of : and this travail is cause of all this writing, for to stir thee thereto if thou feel grace. This murkness of conscience and this nought that I speak of is the image of the first Adam. Saint Paul knew it well, for he saith thus of it : *Sicut portavimus imaginem terreni hominis, ita portemus imaginem jam et caelestis.* As we have here before borne the image of an earthly man, that is the first Adam, right so that we might now bear the image of the heavenly man, which is Jhesu, the second Adam.² He bare this image often well heavy, for it was so cumbersome to him that he cried out of it saying thus : *O quis me liberabit de corpore mortis ?* Ah ! who shall deliver me from this body and image of death ? And then he comforteth himself and other also, thus : *Gratia Dei per Jhesum Christum,* The grace of God by Jhesu Christ.³

Now have I told thee a little of this image, how it is nought. Nevertheless, if it be far from thy knowing how it might be sooth that I say, that nought might be an image, for nought is but nought, and so thou mayest not lightly under-

¹ Not in MSS. 4 and 10.

² 1 Cor. xv. 49.

³ Rom. vii. 24, 25.

stand it ; I shall tell thee more openly of this image as me thinketh.

This image is a false misruled love unto thyself. Out of this love come all manner sins by seven rivers, the which are these ; pride, envy, ire, accidie, covetise, gluttony and lechery. Lo ! this is somewhat that thou mayest feel. By one of these rivers runneth out all manner sin, and putteth thee out of charity if it be deadly, or it letteth the fervour of charity, if it be venial.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Of the image of sin and the runnels thereof; and first of pride.

NOW mayest thou feel that this image is not nought, but is mickle of bad ; for it is a great spring of love unto thy self with such seven rivers as I have said. But now sayest thou : How may this be sooth ? I have forsaken the world and am thrust in an house and deal with no man and contend not.¹ I strive not, I neither buy nor sell, nor have no worldly business, but by the mercy of God I keep me chaste and withhold me from delights ; and over this I pray, I wake, I travail bodily and ghostly as I may. How should then this image be so mickle in me as thou speakest of ? As unto this I answer and grant to thee that I expect that thou dost all these works and more thereto, and may it be sooth as I say. Thou art busy upon thy might for to stop the rivers without, but perhaps the spring within thou leavest whole. Thou art like unto a man which had in his garden a stinking well with many runnels from it. He

¹ MS. "flite nought."

went and stopped the runnels and left the spring whole ; and weened all had been secure. But the water sprung up at the ground of the well and stood still, so mickle that it corrupted all the fairness of the garden and yet ran thither no water out. Right so it may be with thee, if it be so that thou hast by grace stopped the rivers of this image without. So mickle it is well, but beware of the spring within. Soothly but if thou stop and cleanse that as mickle as thou mayest, it will corrupt all the flowers of the garden of thy soul, show they never so fair outward in sight of men. But now sayest thou, whereby shall I know that the ground is stopped if I travail about it ? As unto this I shall tell thee by assay, how thou shalt know this image if it be in thee, and how mickle it is in thee, and thereby thou shalt know how mickle it is stopped in thee, and how little also. And in as mickle as pride is the principal river, I shall tell thee thereof first.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

What pride is, and when it is sin.

PRIDE is nought else, as clerks say, but love of thine own excellence ; that is, of thine own worship. Then the more thou lovest and likest thine own worship, the more is thy pride, and so the more is this image in thee. If thou feel in thine heart a stirring of pride, that thou art holier, wiser, better, and more virtuous than another is, that God hath given thee grace for to serve Him better than other do, and thee thinketh all other beneath thee and thee above them, either any other thought of thy self which showeth to the sight of thy soul an height and excellence, and an overpassing of other men or women, and of this stirring thou feelest a love and a delight, and a vain pleasing in thy self, that thou art so : this is a token that thou bearest this black image, which though it be privy in men's eye, it showeth him openly in God's sight. But sayest thou, that thou mayest not flee such stirrings of pride. For often times thou feelest them against thy will, and therefore thou holdest them no sin ; or if they are sin they are but

venial. As unto this I say thus, that the feeling of these stirrings of pride or of any other which spring out, either of the corruption of this foul image or by incasting of the enemy, it is no sin, in as mickle as thou feelest them. And that is a grace and a privilege by virtue of the passion of Jhesu Christ granted to all Christian men baptized in water and in the Holy Ghost ; for soothly to Jews and Saracens which trow not in Christ all such stirrings are deadly sins. For Saint Paul saith : *Omne quod non est ex fide peccatum est*. All that is done without trowth in Christ is deadly sin.¹ But we Christian men have this privilege of His mercy, such feelings are no sin, but they are pain of original sin. Nevertheless when by negligence and blindness of thy self this feeling is received unwarily in thy thought and turned into a love and liking, then is there sin, more or less after the measure of the love ; sometime venial and sometime deadly. When it is venial and when deadly, fully can I not tell thee.

¹ Rom. xiv. 23.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

When pride is deadly sin ; and how it is in fleshly living men deadly sin.

NEVERTHELESS a little shall I say as methinketh. When the stirring of pride is received and turned into liking, so mickle that the heart chooseth it for a full rest and a full delight and seeketh none other end, but only liking therein, then is this pride deadly sin ; for he maketh and chooseth this delight as his God, without against-standing of reason and will, and therefore is it deadly sin. But now sayest thou : What fool is he that would choose pride for his God ? No man that liveth would do so. As unto this I say that I cannot, nor will not, tell thee in special who sinneth in pride deadly, but in general I shall say thee, there are two manners of pride ; one is bodily pride, another is ghostly.

Bodily pride is of fleshly living men ; ghostly pride is of hypocrites and heretics. These three sin deadly in pride. I mean of such a fleshly living man as Saint Paul speaketh of thus, *Si secundum carnem vixeritis, moriemini*. If ye live after your flesh, ye shall die.¹ Then say I

¹ Rom. viii. 13.

thus : that a worldly man which loveth, and principally,¹ the worship of himself, and chooseth the liking of it as a rest of his heart, and the end of his bliss, he sinneth deadly. But now sayest thou : Who would choose love of his worship instead of God ? As to this, I say that he that loveth his worship, as for to seem better and greater of state, richer and higher than another, and travaillet about it as mickle as he may, if he love it so mickle, that for the getting of it, the keeping and the saving of it, he breaketh the commandment of God, or breaketh love and charity to his even-christian, or is ready and in full will for to break it rather than he should forbear his worship, either of his name or of his fame or of his state or of fulfilling of his will, he sinneth deadly ; for he loveth his worship and chooseth it more than the love of God, and of his even-christian. And yet nevertheless this man that sinneth thus deadly, he would say with his mouth, that he would not choose pride for his God ; but he beguileth himself, for he chooseth it by his deed. Nevertheless another worldly man that loveth worship of himself and pursueth thereafter, if he love it not so mickle that either he would for the getting or for the saving of it do a deadly sin or break charity to his even-christian, he sinneth not deadly but venially, more or less after measure of his love and his liking, with other circumstances.

¹ MS. 9, "seketh."

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

How pride is in heretics deadly sin.

AN heretic sinneth deadly in pride, for he chooseth his rest and his delight in his own opinion and his own saying, for he weeneth it sooth ; the which opinion or saying is against God and Holy Kirk. He will not leave it, but rest him therein, as in a soothfastness ; and so maketh he it his god. But he beguileth himself, for God and Holy Kirk are so oned and accorded together that who so doth against that one, doth against both. And therefore he that sayeth he loveth God and keepeth His biddings, and despiseth Holy Kirk, and setteth at nought the laws and the ordinances of it made by the head and the sovereign in governance of all Christian men, he lieth. He chooseth not God, but he chooseth the love of himself, contrary to the love of God, and so he sinneth deadly. And in that, that he weeneth most for to please God, he most displeaseth Him ; for he is blind and will not see. Of this blindness and of this false resting of heretics in their own feeling, speaketh the Wise Man thus, *Est via quae videtur homini recta ; et*

novissima ejus deducunt ad mortem. There is a way which seemeth to a man rightful, and the last end of it bringeth him to endless death.¹ This way specially is called heresy, for other fleshly sinners that sin deadly and lie still therein commonly suppose aye anon amiss of themselves, and feel biting in conscience that they go not in the right way. But an heretic supposeth aye that he doth well and teacheth well, and yet no man so well; and so weeneth he that his way were the right way, and therefore feeleth he no biting of conscience, nor meekness in heart. And soothly but if God send him meekness whilst he liveth, of His mercy, at last end he goeth to hell, and yet weeneth he for to have done well and get him the bliss of heaven for his teaching.

¹ Prov. xiv. 12.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

How pride is in hypocrites deadly sin.

THE hypocrite also sinneth deadly in pride. He is an hypocrite that chooseth vain joy of himself as the rest and the full delight of his heart. Upon this manner-wise : when a man doth many good deeds bodily and ghostly, and after is put into his mind by suggestion of the enemy a beholding of himself and of his good deeds, how good, how holy he is, how worthy in men's deem, and how high in God's sight above other men, he perceiveth this stirring and receiveth it wilfully, for he weeneth it good and of God in as mickle as it is sooth. For he doth all these good deeds better than other men. And when it is received thus by assent of his will as good, there riseth thereof a love and a delight in his heart of himself, that he is so good and so holy and so mickle grace hath, that it nearly ravisheth his mind out from all other thoughts both ghostly and fleshly for the time, and setteth it in this vain joy of himself as in a rest of his heart. This ravishing in ghostly pride is delectable, and therefore he keepeth it, holdeth it, and nourisheth

it as mickle as he may ; for this love and vain delight he prayeth, he waketh, he fasteth, weareth the hair, and other afflictions, and all these grieve but a little. He praiseth and thanketh God sometime with his mouth, and sometime wrencheth out a tear of his eye, and then him thinketh all safe enough. But soothly all this is for love of praise of himself, which he chooseth and receiveth as it were love and joy in God. And in that is all the sin. He chooseth not sin wilfully for sin ; but he chooseth this delight that he delighteth, and this joy, as for good, as the rest of his soul without displeasing or against-standing of will, for he weeneth it were a joy in God. And it is not so, and therefore sinneth he deadly. Job saith thus of an hypocrite : *Gaudium hypocritae ad instar puncti. Si ascenderit in caelum superbia ejus, et caput ejus nubes tetigerit, quasi sterquilinium in fine perdetur.* The joy of an hypocrite is no more than a point, for if he sty into heaven with rising of his heart, and his head touch the skies, at the last end he is cast out as a dung-heap.¹ The joy of an hypocrite is but a point ; for though he worship himself never so mickle and joy in himself all his lifetime, and depaints himself with all his good deeds in sight and praising of the world, at last it is nought but sorrow and pain. But now sayest thou, there are few such or else none that is so blind that would hold and choose

¹ Job xx. 5, 6.

vain joy in himself as for the joy in God. As unto this I cannot say, nor will not if I could ; but one thing I tell thee, that there be many hypocrites, and nevertheless they ween that they be none, and there be many that dread themselves as hypocrites, and soothly they are none. Which is one and which is other God knoweth and none but He. Whoso will meekly dread, he shall not be beguiled, and whoso weeneth to be secure he may lightly fall ; for Saint Paul saith : *Qui existimat se aliquid esse, cum nihil sit, ipse se seducit.* Whoso ween himself to be aught when he is right nought, he beguileth himself.¹

¹ Gal. vi. 3.

CHAPTER SIXTY

How stirrings of pride and vainglory in good men be but venial sin.

NEVERTHELESS a man or a woman which disposeth him to life contemplative, if it be so that he forsake himself as in his will and offer him wholly to God with a full general will that he would not sin in pride wittingly, nor have no vain joy in himself wilfully, but only in God if he could and might, and after this full will offered to God he feeleth many stirrings of vain glory and delighteth in them for the time, for he perceiveth it not : this liking is but venial sin. And namely if it be so that when he cometh to himself he perceiveth this vain liking, and he reproveth himself and against-standeth this stirring with displeasing of will, and asketh mercy and help of God, then the liking which before was sin our Lord of His mercy soon forgiveth it. And yet he shall have need for his good travail in the against-standings. And that is courtesy of our Lord to all those which are specially His servants and more homely of His court ; as are all those which for His love forsake in a good true will

all worldly and fleshly sins, and give them wholly body and soul unto His service upon their might and their cunning as do ankers enclosed, and also true religious, the which principally for the love of God and the salvation of their souls entered any religion approved by Holy Kirk. Or else if it be so that they entered religion first for a worldly cause, as for their bodily sustenance or some other such cause, if they repent them and turn it into a ghostly cause, as for the service of God—these, as long as they keep this will and pursue it as they may upon their frailty, are true religious. Also what man or woman that it be, in what degree he be in Holy Kirk, priest, clerk, or lewd man, widow, wife or maiden, that will for love of God and salvation of his soul forsake all the worship and liking of this world in his heart truly and fully atwixt God and him, and all wilful businesses of earthly things unto the bare need, and offereth his will entirely for to be His servant upon his might, by devout prayer and holy thoughts with other good deeds that he may do bodily and ghostly, and keepeth this will whole to God steadfastly ; all these are specially God's servants in Holy Kirk. And for this good will and this good purpose, that they have of the gift of God, they shall increase in grace and in charity here living, and they shall have for this special will a special meed in the bliss of heaven, before other chosen souls which offered not

wholly their will and their body to God's service, neither openly nor privily, as they did. All these, which I call God's servants, and of His court more specially, though they by frailty or by uncunning when they feel such stirrings of vain glory, for the time delight therein, and perceive it not, for their reason and their will is letted by the liking that they feel that it may not see the stirrings, they sin not deadly in this liking of vain glory. For that will that they have set generally in their heart before to please God and for to forsake all manner sin, if they knew it, keepeth them there in such stirrings, and in all other that come of frailty, that they sin not deadly, and shall keep them as long as the ground of that will is kept whole.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

How divers states in Holy Church shall have divers meeds in the bliss of heaven ; and of two meeds, sovereign and secondary.

AND over this I say more, in comfort of thee and all others having the state of anker enclosed, and also by the grace of God in comfort of them all that enter any religion approved by Holy Kirk, that all those that by the mercy of our Lord shall be saved, they shall have a special meed and a singular worship in the bliss of heaven for their state of living, before other souls that had not that state in Holy Kirk, though they be never so holy. Which worship is better than all the worship of this world without comparison, for if thou mightest see what it were, thou wouldest not for all the worship of this world, though thou mightest have it without sin, change thy state either of anker or of religious, nor lessen that singular meed in the bliss of heaven ; which meed is called accidental meed. Nevertheless that other men mistake not this that I say, therefore I shall say it more openly. Thou shalt understand that there are two meeds in the bliss

of heaven, which our Lord giveth to chosen souls. The one is sovereign and principal, as is love and knowing of Him after the measure of charity given of God to a soul living in deadly flesh. This meed is best and sovereign, for it is God Himself ; and it is common to all the souls that shall be saved in what state or degree that they be living in Holy Kirk, more or less after the quantity and the mickle head of their charity. For he that most loveth God in charity here in this life, what degree he be in, be he lewd or learned, secular or religious, he shall have most meed in the bliss of heaven, for he shall most love God and know Him, and that is the sovereign meed. And as for this meed, it shall fall that some worldly man or woman, as a lord or a lady, knight or squire, merchant or plowman, or what degree he be in, man or woman, shall have more meed than some priest, or friar, monk or canon or anker enclosed. And why ? soothly for he loveth more God in charity of His gift. And that other meed,¹ that is secondary ; which our Lord giveth for special good deeds that a man doth wilfully over that he is bound to. Of three deeds principal doctors of Holy Kirk make mind of ; as of martyrdom, preaching, and maidenhead. These three works as for an excellence, in as mickle as they pass all other, shall have a special meed which they call aureole ; and that is nought

¹ MS. 9. "Another mede ther is."

else but a singular worship and a special token ordained of God in reward of that special deed before other men that did not so, over the sovereign meed of love of God which is common to them and to all other. Right so it is of all other special good deeds, the which if they be done soothfastly are specially acceptable to the sight of God, and in the doom of Holy Kirk they are excellent ; as are enclosings of ankers done by the authority of Holy Kirk, also enterings into any religion approved, and the stricter that the religion is, the more excellent is the deed in the doom of Holy Kirk. And also after these and beneath these, the taking of the order of priest either for cure of men's souls, and for to minister the sacraments of Holy Kirk, or else for singular devotion for to please God and profit their even-christian by the sacrifice of the precious Body of our Lord Jhesu Christ. Soothly these are special deeds and excellent, openly showed in the doom of Holy Kirk and in the sight of our Lord, when they are done soothfastly for God ; and they shall have a special meed, ilk a man in his degree, in the bliss of heaven. The state of bishop and prelacy is above all these deeds as for this accidental meed. That this is sooth it seemeth by holy writ in the prophet Daniel, where he saith thus : *Tu autem, vade ad praefinitum tempus, et requiesces, et stabis in sorte tua in finem dierum.* This is for to say thus mickle ; the angel when

he had showed to Daniel the privities of God, he said to him thus : Go thou to the rest of thy bodily death, and thou shalt stand in thy sort as a prophet at the last day.¹ And soothly as Daniel shall stand as a prophet at the day of doom, and have the worship and the excellence of a prophet over the sovereign blessed meed of the love and sight of God, right so shalt thou stand in thy sort as an anker, and a religious in the sort of a religious, and so other excellent deeds, and have a singular worship passing other men at the day of doom.

¹ Dan. xii. 13.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

A short stirring to meekness and to charity.

NOW by these words thou mayest, if thou wilt trow them, conceive comfort for thy degree of living, and also matter of meekness. For though it be so that thou shalt have thus mickle meed specially¹ for thy state of living, if thou be saved ; nevertheless it may be that there is many a wife and many a worldly woman shall be nearer God than thou, and more shall love God and better shall know Him than thou, for all thy state. And that oweth to be a shame to thee unless thou be busy to get love and charity as fully and as perfectly as worldly man or woman. For if thou mayest have as mickle charity of the gift of God as he or she hath that dwelleth still in worldly business, thou shalt have as mickle of the sovereign meed as he shall. And thou shalt over that, for that state which thou hast taken, have a singular meed and a worship which he shall not have. Then if thou wilt do well, forget thy state, as it were right nought, for it is sooth, by

¹ MS. 9, "thus much special mede."

thyself it is nought ; and that all thy desire be and all thy business for to get charity and meekness and other ghostly virtues, for therein lieth all.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

How a man shall know how mickle pride is in him.

I HAVE near forgot this image ; but now I turn again thereto. If thou wilt wit how mickle pride is therein, thou mayest assay thy self thus. Look now wisely, and flatter not thyself, if lauding praising or worshipping or fleshly favour of worldly men or of other be liking to thine heart, and turneth it into vain gladness, and well-pleasedness of thy self, thinking stilly in thy heart that men should praise thy life, regard thy speech more than other ; also on the contrariwise if it be so that men reprove thee and set thee at nought, holding thee but a fool or an hypocrite, or if they slander thee or speak evil of thee falsely, or in any other way that they trouble thee unreasonably,¹ and for this thou feelest in thine heart a grievous heaviness against them and a great arising in thine heart with gainstanding for to suffer any shame or villainy in sight of the worldly ; if it be thus with thee, this is a token that there is mickle pride in this dark image, seem thou never so holy in sight of men.

¹ MS. 9, "despise the or disese the unskilfully."

For though these stirrings are nought but little and venial, nevertheless they show well that there is mickle pride hid in the ground of thy heart, as the fox lurketh in the den. These stirrings and many more spring out of this image. So mickle, that thou mayest hardly do any good deed but it shall be meddled with some pride or some vain delight in thy self, and so with thy pride thou defoulest thy good deeds and makest them abominable in the sight of thy Lord. I say not that they are lost because they are meddled with this pride, but I say that they are not so pleasant to thy Lord as they should be if they were simply and truly rooted in meekness. And therefore if thou wilt have cleanness of heart for to come to love of God, thee behoveth not only flee rest of thine heart in vain glory by wilful assenting to pride, and also the reckless liking therein of frailty, though it be against thy will ; but also the feeling thou shalt flee and eschew as mickle as thou mayest. But that thou mayest not do, but if thou be well quick and ready about the keeping of thine heart, as I shall tell thee after.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

Of ire and envy and the branches thereof.

TURN this image upside down and look well therein, and thou shalt find two members of envy and ire fastened thereto, with many branches springing out of them, the which let the love and charity that thou shouldest have to thine even-christian. The branches of ire and envy are these : hatred, evil suspicion, false and unreasonable deeming, melancholy rising of heart against them, despising, mis-saying, unreasonable blaming, unkindness, backbiting, misliking, angriness, and heaviness against them that despise thee or speak evil of thee or against thee, a gladness of their trouble, and a fury against sinful men, and other that will not do as thee thinketh they should do, with a great desire of thine heart under colour of charity and righteousness that they were well punished and chastised for their sin. This stirring seemeth good, nevertheless if thou ransack it well thou shalt find it more fleshly against the person than ghostly against the sin. Thou shalt love the man, be he never so sinful, and thou shalt hate sin in ilk

a man what that he be. Many are beguiled in this, for they set the bitter instead of the sweet, and take darkness instead of light, as the prophet saith : *Vae vobis, qui dicitis malum bonum, et bonum malum ; ponentes lucem tenebras et amarum in dulce.* Woe be to them that say evil is good and good is evil, and set light as darkness, and bitter instead of sweet.¹ Thus do all those that when they should hate the sin of their even-christian and love the person, they hate the person instead of the sin, and ween that they hate the sin. Wherefore it is a craft by itself, who so could do it well.

¹ Isa. v. 20.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

That it is mickle mastery soothfastly to love men in charity and hate their sin.

IT is no mastery for to wake and fast till thine head ache and thy body weaken, nor for to go to Rome and Jerusalem upon thy bare feet, nor for to start about and preach as thou wouldest turn all men by thy preaching ; nor it is no mastery for to make churches and chapels, for to feed poor men and make hospitals. But it is a great mastery for a man to be able to love his even-christian in charity, and wisely hate the sin of him and love the man. For though it be so, that all these deeds before said are good in themselves, nevertheless they are common to good men and to bad, for every man might do them if that he would and had whereof, and therefore for to do that every man may do, I hold it no mastery. But for to love his even-christian in charity and hate his sin, may there no man do but good men only, which have it of the gift of God and not of their travail, as Saint Paul saith : *Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis.* Love and

charity is shed and spread in your hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to you,¹ and therefore it is the more precious, and the more dainty for to come by. All other good deeds without this make not a man good nor worthy the bliss of heaven, but this alone and only maketh a man good and all his good deeds meedful. All other gifts of God and works of man are common to good and to bad [to chosen and reprov'd],² but this gift of charity is only of good and chosen souls.

¹ Rom. v. 5.

² Not in MS. 9.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

That for the same deeds divers men shall have divers meeds.

A GOOD man for love of God fasteth, waketh, goeth on pilgrimage, and forsaketh the liking of the world soothfastly in his heart without feigning. He shall have his meed in the bliss of heaven. An hypocrite for vain glory of himself doth the same deeds and receiveth his meed here. Also a very preacher of God's word, fulfilled of charity and of meekness, sent of God, and of Holy Kirk received, shall have a special meed, that is the aureole, for his preaching. And the hypocrite or an heretic, that neither have meekness nor charity nor are sent of God nor of Holy Kirk, if they preach they have their meed here. Also a good man in worldly state, for love of God maketh kirks, chapels, abbeys, hospitals, and other good deeds of mercy. He shall have his meed in the bliss of heaven ; not for the deed in the self, but for the good will and the charity that he had of the gift of God for to do the good deeds. Another man for vanity of himself and worship and praising of the world and for his

own name doth the same good deeds and hath his meed here. The cause is, in all these, that the one hath charity and the tother hath none. Which is one and which is other, our Lord knoweth and none but He.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

That all men's good deeds should be approved that have likeness of good, save only the open heretic and the open cursed man.

AND therefore we should love and worship all men in our hearts, and approve and receive all their deeds that have the likeness of goodness, though the doers in God's sight be bad, save of the open heretic and of the open cursed man. Of these two specially we should flee and eschew the presence or the communing with them, and we should refuse and reprove their deeds, seem they never so good, as long as they are rebels to God and Holy Kirk. As if a worldly cursed man make a kirk, or feed a poor man, thou mayest surely hold it nought and deem it, as it is. Also if an open heretic which is rebel to Holy Kirk preach and teach, though he converted an hundred thousand souls, hold the deed as to himself right nought. For these men are openly out of charity, without which all is nought that a man doth ; and therefore say I it is a great mastery for a man to be able to love his even-christian in charity. All this saying may be openly proved

by Saint Paul's word : *Si linguis hominum loquar, et angelorum, caritatem non habuero, nichil sum ; et si habuero omnem fidem, ita ut montes transferam, caritatem non habeam, nichil sum. Et si noverim mysteria omnia, nichil sum ; et si distribuero omnes facultates meas in cibos pauperum, et tradidero corpus meum ita ut ardeam, caritatem autem non habuero, nichil mihi prodest.* Saint Paul in praising of charity saith thus : If I speak the language of all men, and of angels also, and have no charity I am right nought. And if I have so great faith that I may turn hills and bear them away, and I have no charity, yet am I nought. Also if I had knowing of all privities without charity, yet am I nought. And if I give all that I have to poor men, and my body to the fire to be burnt, and I had no charity, it profiteth me right nought.¹ Here it seemeth by Saint Paul's word that a man may do all bodily good deeds without charity, and that charity is nought else but for to love God and his even-christian as himself.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

That no good deed may make a man secure without charity. And that charity is only had of the gift of God to those that are meek.

HOW should then any wretched caitiff living in earth, what that he be, have delight or trust or security in himself for aught that he can or may do with all his bodily mights and all his kindly reason, since all this is nought worth without love and charity to his even-christian, and this charity may not be gotten by no working of himself, for it is a free gift of God, sent into a meek soul, as Saint Paul saith. Who then dare hardly say, "I have charity," or "I am in charity"? Soothly no man may say it surely, but he that is perfectly and soothfastly meek. Other men may trow of themselves and hope that they be in charity by tokens of charity; but he that is perfectly meek feeleth it, and therefore might he soothly say it. Thus meek was Saint Paul, and for this said he thus of himself: *Quis separabit nos a caritate Dei? tribulatio? an angustia? etc.* Who shall depart me from the charity of God? for tribulation or anguish?¹ And he answereth cha.

¹ Rom. viii. 35.

himself and saith, that there shall no creature put me from charity of God which I have in Christ Jhesu. Many man doth deeds of charity and hath no charity, as I have said ; for to reprove a sinner for his sin unto his amending and in convenable time, it is a deed of charity, but for to hate the sinner instead of the sin, it is against charity. He that is verily meek can depart that one from the other, and no man but he ; for if a man had morally all the virtues of all philosophers he could not do this. He should be able to hate the sin in all other men, for he hateth it in himself, but he could not love the man in charity for all his philosophy. Also if a man had knowing of clergy and of all divinity and is not soothfastly meek, he shall err and stumble and take that one for the other ; but meekness is worthy to receive a gift of God, the which may not be learnt by kenning of man.

But now peradventure thou beginnest for to dread, for that I said that charity may not be gotten by no work that thou mayest do. How shalt thou then do ? As unto this I say that there is nothing so hard for to get as charity, this is sooth, as with thine own travail ; and also on the contrary wise, there is no gift of God may so lightly be had as charity, for our Lord giveth no gift so freely nor so gladly nor so commonly as He doth charity. How shall I then have it, sayest thou ? Be meek and low in spirit, and thou

shalt have it ; and what is lighter for to do, than for to be meek ? Soothly nothing. Then seemeth it that there is nothing that may so lightly be had as charity, and therefore thou art nought to be mickle a-dread ; be meek, and have it. Thus said Saint James the Apostle : *Deus superbis resistit, humilibus dat gratiam*. Our Lord, he saith, withstandeth proud men, but to meek men soothly He giveth grace.¹ Which grace is properly charity, for after the measure of thy meekness so shalt thou have charity. If thou have meekness imperfectly, only in thy will not in affection, then shalt thou have unperfect charity. This is good, for it sufficeth to salvation, as David saith : *Imperfectum meum viderunt oculi tui*, Lord with Thine eye of mercy thou seest mine imperfection.² But if thou have meekness perfectly thou shalt have perfect charity, and that is best. That other behoves us needs to have if we will be saved, and this we should desire. Then if thou ask me who is perfectly meek, thou shalt no more have of me at this time of meekness but this. He is meek that soothfastly knoweth and feeleth of himself as he is.

¹ James iv. 6.

² Psa. cxxxix. 16.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

How a man shall wit how much ire and envy is hid in the ground of his heart.

NOW turn again to this image, if thou wilt assay how mickle ire and envy is hid in the ground of thine heart that thou feelest not. Look well and behold thyself wisely, when such stirrings of ire and envy against thine even-christian spring out of thy heart. The more arising that thou hast, and the more stirred that thou art by melancholy bitterness or wicked will against him, the more is this image ; for the more thou grouchest by impatience either against God for tribulation or sickness or other bodily disease sent of God, or against thine even-christian.¹ the less is the image of Jhesu reformed in thee. I say not that such grouchings or fleshly angrinesses are deadly sins ; but I say that they let cleanness of heart and peace of conscience, that thou mayest not have full charity, by the which thou shouldest come to life contemplative. For that end is the purpose of all my saying, that thou shouldest not only cleanse thine heart from

¹ MS. 2, "for ought that he doth ageinst the."

deadly sins, but also of venial as mickle as thou mightest ; and that the ground of sin might by the grace of Jhesu Christ be somewhat slackened in thee. For though it be so that thou feelest none evil will against thine even-christian for a time, yet art thou not secure that the ground of ire is quenched in thee, nor yet art thou not lord of the virtue of charity. For suffer him touch thee a little by an angry or a shrewd word, and feel anon if thine heart be yet made whole by fullhead of charity. The more thou art stirred and evil willed against the person, the further art thou from perfect charity of thine even-christian ; the less thou art stirred, the nearer thou art charity.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

By what tokens thou shalt wit if thou lovest thine even-christian, and what ensample thou shalt take of Christ for to love him.

AND if thou be not stirred against the person by angry and fell cheer outward, nor by no privy hate in thine heart for to despise or demean him, or for to set him at nought ; but the more shame and villainy he doth to thee in word or deed, the more pity and compassion thou hast of him, as thou wouldst have of a man that were out of his wit or mind, and thee thinketh thou canst not find in thine heart for to hate him, for love is so good in the self, but pray for him and help him and desire his amending, not only with thy mouth as hypocrites can do, but with affection of love in thine heart, then hast thou perfect charity to thine even-christian. This charity had Saint Stephen perfectly when he prayed for them that stoned him to the death. This charity counselled Christ to all those that would be His perfect followers when He said thus : *Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos, orate pro persequentibus et calumniantibus vos.*

Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you ; pray for them that pursue and slander you.¹ And therefore if thou wilt follow Christ, be like to Him in this craft. Learn for to love thine enemies and sinful men, for all these are thine even-christians. Look and bethink thee how Christ loved Judas, that was both His deadly enemy, and a sinful caitiff. How goodly Christ was to him, how benign, how courteous, and how lowly to him that He knew damnable. And nevertheless He chose him to His Apostle, and sent him for to preach with other Apostles. He gave him power to work miracles, He showed to him the same good cheer in word and in deed as He did to other Apostles, He washed his feet and fed him with His precious body, and preached to him as He did to other Apostles ; He bewrayed him not openly, nor mis-said him not, nor despised him nor spake never evil of him ; and yet though he had done all these he had said but sooth. And over more, when Judas took him He kissed him and called him His friend. And all this charity showed Christ to Judas which He knew for damnable ; in no manner feigning nor flattering, but in soothfastness of good love and clean charity. For though it were so, that Judas was unworthy for to have had any gift of God or any sign of love for his wickedness, nevertheless it was worthy and reasonable

¹ Matt. v. 44.

that our Lord should show as He is. He is love and goodness, and for this it falleth to Him for to show love and goodness to all His creatures, as He did to Judas.¹ Follow after somewhat if thou mayest, for though thou be thrust in an house with thy body, nevertheless in thine heart, where the stead of love is, thou shouldest be able to have part of such love to thine even-christian as I speak of. Who so weeneth then himself for to be a perfect follower² of Christ's teaching and His living, as some man weeneth that he is in as mickle as he preacheth and teacheth and is poor of worldly goods as Christ was, and cannot follow Christ in this love and in this charity for to love his [even-christian ilk a man, good and bad, friends and foes, without feigning or flattering, despising in thine heart against the man, angeriness, melancholious reproving, soothly he beguileth himself. The nearer that he weeneth for to do, the further he is ; for Christ saith Himself to them that would be His disciples thus, *Hoc est preceptum meum, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos*. This is My bidding, that ye love you together, as I loved you.³ For if ye

¹ MS. 2. "I say not that he loved him for his sin, nor he loved him not for his chosen, as he loved S. Peter. But he loved him in as much as he was his creature, and shewed him tokens of love if he would have been amended thereby." This interpolation is not in MS. 9.

² MS. 9. "Perfit lufer and a folower."

³ John xiii. 34.

love as I loved, then are ye My disciples. But now, sayest thou, how shalt thou love him that is bad as well as him that is good ? As unto this I say thus, that thou shalt love both good and bad in charity, but not for the same cause ; as I shall tell how thou shalt love thine even-christian as thy self. Now thou shalt love thyself only in God, or else for God. In God thou lovest thyself when thou art rightful by grace and virtuous ; and thou lovest not thyself, but only for that righteousness and virtues that God giveth thee. Then lovest thou thyself in God, for thou lovest not thyself but God ; also for God thou lovest thyself, and if thou wert in deadly sin and wouldst be made rightful and virtuous, then lovest thou thyself not as thou art, for thou art unrightful, but as thou wouldst be. Right so shalt thou love thine even-christian. If they be good and rightful, thou shalt love them by charity in God, only for they be good and rightful ; for then lovest thou God in them, as goodness and righteousness, more than if they be bad in deadly sin, as thine enemies that hate thee or other of the which thou havest full evidence that they are not in grace. Yet shalt thou love them ; not as they are, nor as good men and rightful, for they are bad and unrightful, but thou shalt love them for God, that they might be good and rightful. And so shalt thou nothing hate in them, but that thing that is contrary to right-

eousness, and that is sin. This is as I understand the teaching of Saint Austin. He that is meek soothfastly, or would be meek, can love his even-christian, and none but he.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

How thou shalt know how mickle covetise is in thine heart.

LIFT up this image and look well all about, and thou shalt be able to see covetise and love of earthly thing occupy a great part of this image, though it seem little. Thou hast forsaken riches and mickle having of this world, and art shut in a dungeon ; but hast thou forsaken the love of all this ? I expect not yet ; it is less mastery for to forsake worldly good than for to forsake love of it. Peradventure thou hast not forsaken thy covetise, but thou hast changed it from great things into small, as from a pound into a penny and from a silvern piece into a disc of one half-penny. This is a simple change ; thou art no good merchant. These ensamples are childish ; nevertheless they betoken more. If thou trow not me, assay thyself if thou have love and delight in the having and in the holding of anything that thou hast, such as it is, with the which love thou feedest thine heart for a time ; or if thou have desire and yearning for to have something that thou hast not, with which desire thine

heart is travailed by unreasonable business, that the clear desire of virtues and of God may not rest therein. This is a token that there is covetise in this image, and if thou wilt assay better, look if anything that thou hast be taken away from thee, by mastery or by borrowing or by any otherwise, and thou mayest not gotten it again, and for this thou art vexed, angered and troubled in thine heart ; both for thou wantest that thing that thou wouldst have and mayest not, and also against him that hath it thou art stirred, for he might restore it again and will not. This is a token that thou lovest worldly good, for thus do worldly men. When their good and their riches is taken from them, they are heavy, sorry, and angry, and contend and strive against them that have it, openly by word and by deed ; but thou dost all this in thine heart privily, where God seeth. And yet art thou in more default than a worldly man ; for thou hast forsaken in likeness the love of all worldly things, but a worldly man hath not so, and therefore he is excused though he strive and pursue for his goods by lawful ways, for to have them again. But now sayest thou, that thee behoveth for to have thy necessities of such things as longeth to thee, as well as a worldly man. I grant well thereto, but thou shouldest not love it, nor have liking in the holding and in the keeping of it, nor sorrow nor heaviness feel in the losing or in the withdrawing

of it ; for, as Saint Gregory saith, as mickle sorrow as thou hast in the losing of a thing, so mickle love haddest thou in the keeping. And therefore if thine heart were made whole and thou haddest soothfastly felt a desire of ghostly things, and had withall a sight of the least ghostly thing that is, all the love and the liking of any earthly thing thou shouldest set it at nought, it should not cleave upon thee. For to love and for to have more than thee needeth reasonably, it is great default. Also for to love that thing that thou needeth, is default, but not so great ; but for to have and use that thee needeth without love of it is no default. Soothly many that have the state and the likeness of poverty are mickle blinded in this point and hindered from the love of God. I accuse not no man, nor no state reprove, for in every ilk state some are good and some are other. But one thing I say to ilk a man or woman which hath taken the state of wilful poverty, whether he be religious or secular, or what degree he be in. As long as his affection is bound, fastened, and as it were glued with the love of any earthly thing that he hath or would have, he may not have nor feel soothfastly the clean love and the clear sight of ghostly things.

For, as Saint Austin saith to our Lord thus : Lord, he loveth thee but little, that loveth any thing with thee. For the more love and covetise of any earthly things is in thee, the less is the

love of God in thine heart ; for though it be so that this love of earthly things put them not out of charity, but if it be so mickle that it strangle the love of God and of their even-christian, soothly it hindereth them and letteth them from the fervour of charity, and also from that special meed that they should have in the bliss of heaven for perfect poverty. And that is a great loss if they might see it ; for whoso might know ghostly meed, how good, how precious, and how worthy it is, for it is aye lasting, he would not for the love of all earthly joy or having of all earthly things, though he might have it without sin, let nor lessen the least meed of the bliss of heaven, which he might have if that he would. I speak further than I do, but I pray thee do thou as I say by the grace of God, if thou mayest, or any other man whoso will ; for that were a comfort to mine heart, that though I may not have it in myself as I say, that I might have it in thee, or in another creature which hath received of our Lord more plenty of His grace than I. But see now then, since covetise in the naked ground letteth a man or a woman so mickle from the ghostly feeling of the love of God, how mickle more it letteth then and encumbreth worldly men and women which, by all their wits and businesses, night and day study and travail how they might get riches and plenty of worldly good. They can none other delight have but in worldly

things ; nor they will not, for they seek it not. I say no more of them at this time, for in this writing I speak not to them ; but this I say, if they might see and would see what that they do, they should not do so.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

Of gluttony, sloth, and lechery.

BUT yet mayest thou see more in this image, though it be murk ; and that is fleshly love to thyself in gluttony, accidie, and lechery. These fleshly likings make a man well beastly, and far from inly savour of the love of God and from the clear sight of ghostly things. But now sayest thou, that since thee behoveth needlings eat and drink and sleep, and that thou mayest not do without liking, therefore thee thinketh that this liking is no sin. As unto this I say that if thou keep thee in eating and drinking and other needful things ¹ measure, upon thy need as reason asketh, and thou receivest no more liking than kind asketh, and all this thou dost for the ghostly delight which thou feelest in thy soul, I grant thee forsooth that thou then sinnest right nought. For then can thou well eat, soothly and without doubt. I am full far from that knowing, and further from the working ; for to eat I have by kind, but for to have cunning to eat I may not but by grace. Saint Paul had by grace this cunning as he saith himself thus :

¹ MS. 9, "to the body."

Ubique et in omnibus institutus, sum ; et satiari, et esurire, et abundare, et penuriam pati. Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat. I am informed and kenne in all things, for I can hunger and I can eat, I can with plenty and I can with poverty. I may all in Him that strengtheneth me.¹ Saint Austin saith to our Lord thus : Lord, thou hast kenne me that I should take meat as a medicine. Hunger is a sickness of kind, and therefore the liking that cometh withall, in as mickle as it is kindly and needful, it is no sin ; but when it passeth into lust and into wilful liking, then it is sin. And therefore, there lieth all the mastery, for to have cunning to depart wisely need from lust and wilful liking. They are so knit together, and that one cometh with that other, that it is hard for to receive that one as the need and reprove the tother as wilful lust, which often cometh under colour of need. If a man would take only meat and drink as medicine for a sickness, he should have cunning to depart well the lust from the need. Nevertheless, since it is so that need is the ground of this sin, and that need is no sin, for be a man never so holy, him behoveth eat and drink and sleep, therefore the lust and the liking that cometh under colour of this need and passeth this need is the less sin.

For a man sinneth not commonly deadly in gluttony, but if he be encumbered with other

¹ Phil. iv. 12, 13.

deadly sins before done. Then may he the lightlier sin deadly in this. For this is sooth, he that chooseth the lust and the liking of his flesh in delices and welfare of meat and drink as a full rest of his heart, that he would in his heart never have other joy nor other bliss, but live aye in such lust of his flesh if he might, it is no doubt but that he sinneth deadly, for he loveth his flesh more than God. But he that lieth in a deadly sin of pride or envy or such other, he is blinded and so bounden to the devil that for the time he hath not the power cleanly of his free will ; and therefore he may not well withstand fleshly likings, but falleth down wilfully to them, as beast doth upon carrion. And in so mickle as he hath no general will before to God principally, because that he is in deadly sin, therefore the lust of gluttony which he falleth in is lightly to him deadly sin, for he maketh none again-standing general nor special. But another man or a woman which is in grace and in charity hath alway a good general will to God in his soul, whether he sleep or wake, eat or drink, or what deed that he doth, so that it be not evil in the self ; by the which will he chooseth and desireth God above all things, and had liefer forbear all the likings of this world than his God,¹ for love of Him. This will, though it be but general, is of so great virtue by the grace of

¹ MS. 2, "than wrathe his God." MS. 9, as in text.

our Lord Jhesu, that though he fall by frailty in lust and liking of meat and drink, or such other sickness, either in excess of too mickle eating, or too often, or too greedily, or too lustily and delicately, or too soon in unseasonableness, it saveth and keepeth him from deadly sin. And this is sooth, as long as he is in charity by other deeds and keepeth this general goodwill in all that he doth ; and namely yet, if he know admonish his own wretchedness, and crieth after mercy, and is in purpose specially for to withstand all such lusts fleshly. Our Lord is good and merciful, and these venial sins of gluttony He forgiveth soon unto a meek soul ; for the stirrings and the likings of gluttony, in as mickle as they are hardest for to flee by cause of need of the bodily kind, among all other sins are most excusable and least perilous. And therefore thou shalt not arise against the ground of this sin as thou shalt against all other sins. For the ground of this sin is only need, which may not be escaped but if thou wilt do worse and slay the need, as many fools do, which should flee the thief and spare the true man, that is to say they should flee the unreasonable lust and the wilful liking, and spare and keep the bodily kind. But against other sins thou shalt arise for to destroy ; not only the deadly sins and the great venials, but also against the ground of them as mickle as thou mayest.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

The ground of lechery should be destroyed by ghostly travail and not by bodily.

SEE by this reason, thou mayest not live without meat and drink ; but thou mayest live without lechery if thou wilt, and never but the better. And therefore thou shalt flee not only the deed of it, which is deadly sin, and also the wilful liking of it in the heart without deed, which is venial, and sometime it is deadly ; but also thou shalt arise against the ground of it, for to destroy the feeling and the liking rising of fleshly stirrings. But this travail against the ground ¹ namely shall be ghostly, as by prayers and ghostly virtues, and not bodily by no bodily penance. For wit thou well, though thou wake and fast and scourge thyself and do all that thou can, thou shalt never have that cleanness and that chastity without the gift of God and the grace of meekness. Thou shouldest be able rather to slay thyself than thou shouldest slay fleshly stirrings and feelings of lusts of lechery, either in heart or in thy flesh, by any bodily penance. But by the

¹ MS. 9, "of lecherie."

grace of Jhesu in a meek soul, the ground may be stopped and destroyed, and the spring may be dried ; and that is very chastity in body and in soul.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

That a man should be busy to put away all stirrings of sin : but more of ghostly sins than of bodily.

ON the same manner may be said of pride, covetise, and of such other ; for thou might live though thou wert never proud nor covetous, and therefore thou shalt destroy all the feelings of them so mickle as thou might. But in gluttony thou shalt arise and smite away all the unreasonable stirrings, and save the ground whole. And therefore he that riseth against the feeling of fleshly liking in meat and drink, more felly and more sharply than against the feelings and stirrings of pride, which for they seem fair are not lightly reprov'd, or of envy, ire, covetise, or lechery, I say that he is half blind. For he seeth not yet ghostly uncleanness, as of pride and envy, how foul it is in God's sight. I expect if a man might see with his ghostly eye how foul pride and covetise are in the sight of God, and how contrary to Him, he should more loathe a stirring of pride and the vain delight of it ; and also he should more dread and arise against an evil will of envy or ire to his even-christian, than

many a stirring and liking, either of gluttony or lechery. Nevertheless, all men ween not so, for commonly men are more afraid for to feel stirring of a fleshly sin, and have for it more sorrow and more heaviness, than for great likings in vain glory or other ghostly sins. But they are not wise, for if they will understand holy writ and doctors' saws thereof, they should find as I say, which I nor may nor will rehearse now.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

That hunger and other bodily pains let much ghostly working.

I WILL not excuse them that fall in likings of gluttony and lechery, that they sin not ; for I wot well that all the species of them are sin more or less, after the measure of the lust and wilful liking, with other circumstances of them. But I would that thou knew and charged ilk a sin as it is ; more the more, as are all ghostly sins, less the less, as are all fleshly sins. And yet shalt thou nevertheless hate and flee all, bodily and ghostly, upon thy might ; for wit thou well, that fleshly desires and unreasonable likings in meat and drink, or any liking that longeth to the body passing reasonable need, though they be not aye great sins to him that is in charity, nevertheless to a soul that desireth cleanness and ghostly feeling of God, they are full heavy and bitter, and mickle for to eschew. For the spirit may not feel his kindly savour within till the flesh hath mickle lost of his beastly savour without ; and therefore if thou wilt come to cleanness of heart, thee behoveth withstand unreason-

able stirrings of fleshly desires. But against the ground thou shalt not arise, as I have said before ; for the ground of it is need, as kindly hunger, which thou shalt needings feel and tend thereto in time, and help thyself against it by medicine of meat as thou wouldest help thyself reasonably against a bodily sickness, that thou mightest the more freely serve God bodily and ghostly.

For wit thou well that what man or woman shall be occupied ghostly in thoughts, reasonable pain of hunger wilfully taken, or sickness in the stomach or in the head or in other part of the body, for default of himself by too mickle fasting or in any other wise, shall mickle let the spirit and mickle hinder him from the knowing and the beholding of ghostly things, unless he have the more grace. For though it be so that bodily pain, either of penance or of sickness, or else bodily occupation, sometimes letteth not the fervour of love to God in devotion, but often increaseth it ; soothly I expect that it letteth the fervour of love in contemplation, which may not be had nor felt soberly, but in great rest of body and of soul. For this do thou reasonably that longeth to thee, and keep thy bodily kind upon reason, and suffer God then send what that He will, be it health or sickness. Take it gladly, and grouch not against God wilfully.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

What remedy a man shall use against undiscreet eating and drinking.

DO then as I say thee : take thy meat as it cometh, and ordain for it if need be upon reason, and take it gladly as for need. Be wary of lust that cometh with the need ; eschew too mickle as well as too little. And when thou hast done, and it cometh to thy mind biting¹ that thou hast either eaten too mickle or too little, and beginneth for to vex thee and draw thee to over mickle bitterness, lift up the desire of thine heart to thy good Lord Jhesu, and know thyself for a wretch and a beast, asking Him forgiveness. And say that thou wilt amend it, and trust of His forgiveness by His mercy. And when thou hast done thus, the shortlier the liefer, leave off then and trouble no longer withall, nor strive not too mickle as thou wouldest destroy it utterly, for it is not worth for to do so. Thou shalt never bring it so about. But readily ordain thee to some other occupation bodily or ghostly, after thou feelest thee disposed, that thou mightest profit

¹ MS. 9, "biting in conscience."

more in other virtues, as meekness and charity.

For wit thou well, he that hath in his desire and in his travail none regard to none other thing but to meekness and charity, aye craving after them how he might have them, he shall in that desire with working following after, profit and wax in all other virtues, as in chastity, abstinence and such other though he have but little regard to them, more in a year than he should without this desire profit in seven, though he strive with gluttony and lechery and such other continually and beat himself ilk a day with scourges from morn till evensong time.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

That through busy desire and travail in meekness and charity, a man cometh sooner to all other virtues.

GET to thee then meekness and charity, and if thou wilt travail and swink busily for to have them, thou shalt have enough for to do in getting of them. [And if thou mayest get them] they shall rule and measure thee full privily, how thou shalt eat and drink and succour all thy bodily need, that there shall no man wit it but if thou wilt, and shalt not be in perplexity and in dread nor angriness and heaviness, nor in lust nor in lightness, but in a peace of a glad conscience with a sober restfulness. I speak further than I thought to have spoken in this matter, but nevertheless do if thou mayest as I thee say, and I hope God shall make all well.

By this then that I have said may thou some deal see in this image of sin how mickle it letteth thee. The gospel saith how Abraham spake to the rich man that was buried in hell on this wise : *Chaos magnum inter nos et vos firmatum est, ut hi qui volunt transire ad vos, non possint, neque inde huc transmeare.* There is a great chaos, that is to

say a thick murkness, atwixt us and thee, that we may not come to thee nor thou to us.¹ This murk image in thy soul and in mine also may be called a great chaos, for it letteth us that we cannot come to Abraham, which is Jhesu, and it letteth Him that He will not come to us.

¹ Luke xvi. 26.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

Of the five bodily wits.

LIGHT up thy lantern and see in this image five windows by the which sin cometh into thy soul, as the prophet saith : *Mors ingreditur per fenestras nostras.* Death cometh in by our windows.¹ These windows are our five wits, by the which thy soul goeth out from himself and seeketh his delight and his feeding in earthly things, against his own kind ; as by the eye for to see curious and fair things, by the ear for to hear wondrous and new tidings, and so of the other wits. By the unreasonable using of these wits unto vanity wilfully, thy soul is mickle letted from the ghostly wits within ; therefore thee behoveth stop the windows and shut them, but only when need asketh for to open them. And that were little mastery if thou mightest once see thy soul by clear understanding, what it is, and how fair it is in his own kind, were not that it is overlaid with a black mantle of this foul image.

¹ Jer. ix. 21.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

That a soul for default of knowing of itself goeth out by the five wits for to seek outward liking.

BUT for thou knowest it not, therefore thou leavest the inly sight of thyself and seekest thy meat from without as a beast unreasonable. Thus saith our Lord to a chosen soul in holy writ : *Si ignoras te, o pulcra inter mulieres, egredere et abi post vestigia gregum sodalium tuorum, et pasce hoedos tuos.* Thou fair amongst women, if thou know not thyself, go out and walk after the steps of the flock of thy fellows and feed thy kids.¹ And it is thus mickle for to say : Thou soul fair by kind, made to the likeness of God, frail as a woman in thy body for thy first sin, because that thou knowest not thyself, that angels' food should be thy delices within, therefore thou goest out by bodily wits and seekest thy meed and thy liking as a beast of the flock, that is as one of the reprov'd ; and therewith thou feedest thy thoughts and thine affections, which are unclean as kids.

¹ Cant. i. 7.

CHAPTER EIGHTY

That a soul should not beg without, but within of Jhesu, what it needeth.

THIS is a shame to thee for to do so. And therefore turn home again in thyself, and hold thee within and beg no more without, namely swines meat ; for if thou wilt always be a beggar, ask and crave within of thy Lord Jhesu, for He is rich enough [courteous and free enough]¹ and gladlier will give than thou wilt ask. And run no more out as a beast of the flock, as a worldly man or woman that hath none other delight but in his bodily wits. And if thou do thus, thy Lord Jhesu will give thee all that thee needeth, for He may lead thee into His wine cellar and make thee assay of His wines, for He hath many tuns, which thee liketh best. Thus a chosen soul, joying in holy writ, saith of our Lord : *Introduxit me rex in cellam vinariam.* A king led me into a wine cellar.² And that is for to say : In so mickle as I forsook the drunkenness of fleshly lusts and worldly likings, which are but as wormwood, for the one king of bliss, Lord Jhesu

¹ Not in MS. 2.

² Cant. ii. 4.

led me in ; that is to say first into myself for to behold and know myself, and after He led me into His cellar, that is to say above myself by overpassing only into Him, and gave me assay of His wine, that is for to say a taste of ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy. These are not words of me, a wretched caitiff living in sin, but they are the words of the spouse of our Lord in holy writ. And these words I say to thee, that thou mightest draw in thy soul from without and follow after as mickle as thou mayest.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

That the hole of imagination needeth to be stopped, as well as the windows of the wits.

BUT now sayest thou, that thou dost so. Thou seest no worldly things nor hearest, nor hast none use of thy bodily wits more than need asketh, and for this thou art enclosed. As to this I say if thou do thus, then hast thou stopped a great window of this image. But yet art thou not secure, for thou hast not stopped the privy holes of imagining in thine heart. For though thou see me not with thy bodily eye, thou mayest see me with thy soul by imagination ; and so mayest thou do of all other bodily things. Then if thy soul be fed wilfully by imagining in vanities of the world, in desiring of worldly things for a wilful comfort and an ease, soothly though thy soul be within as for the bodily wits it is nevertheless full far without by such vain imagination.

But now askest thou if it be any great sin, a soul for to occupy him in such vanities, either in the wits or in imagining. As unto this I say I would that thou shouldest ask no man this question, for he that will soothfastly love God, he asketh not

whether this is greater sin or this. For him shall think what thing letteth him from the love of God is great sin, and him shall think no sin but that thing that is not good and letteth him from the love of God. What is sin but a wanting and a forbearing of God ? I say not that it shall be painful to him as a deadly sin or a venial should be, nor I say not but that he knoweth deadly from a venial [and more fleeth it].¹

¹ Not in MS. 9.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

*When the use of the wits or the imagination is deadly sin,
and when venial.*

NEVERTHELESS some deal shall I say to thy question, for thy desire draweth out of mine heart more than I thought for to have said in the beginning. Our Lord saith in the gospel thus : *Homo quidam fecit coenam magnam et vocavit multos. Et misit servum suum ora coenae dicere invitatis ut venirent. Primus dixit : Villam emi ; rogo te, habe me excusatum. Secundus dixit : Juga boum emi quinque, et eo probare illa. Et tertius dixit : Uxorem duxi, et ideo non possum venire.* A man made a great supper and called many thereto, and sent his servant at supper time to them that were prayed. The first excused him, that he might not come, for he had bought a town ; that other also excused him, for he had bought five yokes of oxen, and went for to assay them ; the third for he had wedded a wife.¹ I leave for to speak of the first and the last, and tell thee of the mid, of him that bought the oxen. These five yokes of oxen betokeneth the

¹ Luke xiv. 16-20.

five wits, which are beastly, as is an ox. Now this man that was called to the supper was not reprov'd for he bought the oxen, but for he went for to assay them, and so he should not come. Right so say I to thee, for to have thy wits and use them in need it is no sin ; but if thou go for to assay them by vain delight in creatures, then it is sin. For if thou choose that delight as a final rest of thy soul and as a full liking, that thou carest have none other bliss but such worldly vanity, then it is deadly. For thou choosest it as thy God, and so shalt thou be put from the supper. For Saint Paul forbade us that we should not assay our wits so, when he said thus : *Non eatis post concupiscentias vestras*. Thou shalt not go after thy lusts, nor wilfully assay thy likings. A man or a woman that is encumbered with deadly sins shall not escape deadly sin in this, though he see it not ; but I hope that it toucheth not thee. Nevertheless, if thou by frailty delight thee in thy wits and in such vanity, but with that, thou keepest thee in charity in other sides and thou choosest not delight for a full rest of thy soul but thou settest aye God before all things in thy desire, this sin is venial, after the circumstances more or less ; nor thou shalt not for these venial sins be put from the supper in the bliss of heaven. But thou shalt want the tasting and the feeling of that delicate supper living in earth, but if thou

be busy with all thy mights for to withstand such venial sins ; for though it be so that venial sins break not charity, soothly they let the fervour and the ghostly feeling of charity.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

How a ghostly man or woman shall have them to them that come to them,

BUT now sayest thou that thou mayest not keep thee from hearing of vanities, for diverse men, worldly and other, come often for to speak with thee, and tell thee sometimes tales of vanity.

As unto this I say thus, that communing with thine even-christian is not mickle against thee, but helpeth thee sometimes if thou work wisely. For thou mayest assay thereby the measure of thy charity to thine even-christian, whether it be mickle or little. Thou art bound, as ilk man and woman is, to love thine even-christian principally in thine heart, and also in deed for to show him tokens of charity as reason asketh, upon thy might, and upon thy knowing. Now since it is that thou owest not to go out of thine house for to seek occasion how thou mightest profit thine even-christian by deeds of mercy, because thou art enclosed, nevertheless thou art bound for to love them all in thine heart, and to them that come to thee for to show them tokens of love soothfastly. And therefore whoso will

speake with thee, what that he be, in what degree that he be, and thou know not what he is nor why he cometh, be soon ready with a good will for to wit what his will is. Be not aloof nor suffer him not long for to abide thee, but look how ready and how glad thou wouldest be if an angel of heaven would come so and speake with thee. So ready and so buxom be thou in will for to speake with thine even-christian when he cometh to thee. For thou wost not what he is nor why he cometh, nor what need he hath of thee nor thou of him, till thou hast assayed. And though thou be in prayer or devotion, that thee thinketh loath for to break off, for thee thinketh thou shouldest not leave God for man's speech, me thinketh not so in this case ; for if thou be wise thou shalt not leave God but thou shalt find Him and have Him and see Him in thine even-christian as well as in prayer, but in another manner thou shalt have Him than in prayer.

If thou couldest well love thine even-christian, it should not hinder thee for to speake with them discreetly. Discretion shalt thou have upon this manner as me thinketh. Whoso come to thee, ask him meekly what he will ; and if he come for to tell his trouble and be comforted of thy speech, hear him gladly, and suffer him say what he will for ease of his own heart. And when he hath done, comfort him if thou can goodly and charitably, and soon break off. And then after that,

if he will fall in idle tales or vanities of other men's deeds answer him but little nor feed not his speech ; and he shall soon be irked and soon take his leave. If it be another man, that cometh for to teach thee, as a man of Holy Kirk, hear him lowly with reverence for his order, and if his speech comfort thee ask of him, and make thee not for to teach him. It falleth not to thee to teach a priest, but in need. If his speech comfort thee not answer little, and he will soon take his leave. If it be another man that cometh for to give thee his alms or else for to hear thee speak, or for to be taught of thee, speak goodly and meekly to them all. Reprove no man of his defaults ; it falleth not to thee, but if he be the more homely with thee, that thou wost well that he will take it of thee. And shortly for to say, as mickle as thou conceivest that should profit thine even-christian, namely ghostly, mayest thou say if thou can and he will take it. And of all other things keep silence as mickle as thou mayest, and thou shalt in short time have but little press that shall let thee. Thus me thinketh ; do better if thou mayest.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR

How the members of this image, that is the soul, may be defouled with the seven deadly sins; and how they may be broke down.

BY this that I have said mayest thou see a little the murkness of this image; not for I have discried it to the full as it is, for I cannot. Nevertheless by this little thou mayest see the more if thou look well. But now sayest thou: Whereby wost thou that I bear such an image about with me as thou speakest of? As unto this I can answer: I may take upon me a word in prophet, and it is this: *Inveni idolum michi*, This is for to say, I have found a false image, that men call an idol, in myself,¹ well foul disfigured and forshapen with wretchedness of all these sins which I have spoken of, by the which I am cast down in many fleshly likings and worldly vanities from cleanness of heart and feeling of ghostly virtues, more than I can or may say; and that me repenteth, and I cry mercy. By this wretchedness that I feel in myself mickle more than I have said, may I the better tell thee of thine

¹ Hosea xii. 8.

image. For all come we of Adam and of Eve, clothed with clothes of a beast's hide, as holy writ saith of our Lord thus : *Fecit Dominus Adae et uxori ejus tunicas pelliceas*. Our Lord made to Adam and to his wife clothes of beasts hide,¹ in token that for his sin he was forshapen like to a beast ; with which beastly clothes we all are born, and all belapped and disfigured from our kindly shape.

¹ Gen. iii. 21.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE

Which are the limbs of the image of sin.

THEN is this an ugly image ¹ for to look upon. The head is pride ; for pride is the first and principal sin, as the Wise Man saith : *Initium omnis peccati superbia*. The beginning of all manner sin is pride.² The back and the hinder part of it is covetise ; as Saint Paul saith : *Quae retro sunt obliviscens, in anteriora me extendo*. I shall forget all worldly things which are backward, and I shall stretch me forward to endless things.³ The breast, in which is the heart, is envy, for it is no fleshly sin, but it is a devil's sin ; as the Wise Man saith : *Invidia diaboli mors introivit in orbem terrarum. Imitantur illum omnes qui ex parte ejus sunt*. By envy of the devil death came into all the world ; for this all those that are of his party follow him therein.⁴ The arms of it are wrath, in as mickle as a man wreaketh him of his wrath by his arms, against Christ's forbidding in the gospel. *Si quis per-*

¹ MS. 2, " a horrible ymage " ; MS. 9, " foul ymage."

² Eccclus. x. 15.

³ Phil. iii. 13.

⁴ Wisdom ii. 24, 25.

cusserit te in unam maxillam, praebe sibi et alteram. If a man smite thee upon the one cheek with his hand, thou shalt not smite him again, but offer him the tother cheek.¹ The belly of this image is gluttony, as Saint Paul saith : *Esca ventri, et venter escis ; Deus hunc et has destruet.* Meat serveth to the belly and the belly serveth to get meat ; ² but God shall destroy both the belly and the meat. That shall be at last end, in the full reforming of His chosen, and in deeming of the reprovèd. The members of it are lechery, of the which Saint Paul saith thus : *Non exhibeatis membra vestra arma iniquitatis ad peccatum.* Ye shall not give your members, specially your privy members, for to be arms to sin.³ The feet of this image are accidie, and therefore the Wise Man saith to the soul for to stir him to good works : *Discurre, festina, suscita amicum tuum.* That is to say, run quickly about unto good works, and haste thee speedily, for the time passeth ; and raise up thy friend, which is Jhesu, by devout prayer and meditation.⁴ Here hast thou heard the members of this image.

¹ Matt. v. 39.

² 1 Cor. vi. 13.

³ Rom. vi. 13.

⁴ Prov. vi. 3.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX

Whereof the image of Jhesu is made, and whereof the image of sin.

THIS is not the image of Jhesu, but it is liker an image of the devil ; for the image of Jhesu is made of virtues, with meekness, perfect love, and charity. But this is of false fleshly love to thyself, with all these members fastened thereto. This image bearest thou and ilk man, what that he be, until by grace of Jhesu it be some deal destroyed and broken down. Thus it seemeth that David saith in the psalter : *Verumtamen in imagine pertransit homo ; sed et frustra conturbatur.* This is for to say, though it be so that a man were made in the beginning to the image of God, stable and steadfast, nevertheless because of sin he passeth forth living in this world, in this image of sin, by the which he is unstable and troubled in vain.¹ Also Saint Paul speaketh of this image thus : *Sicut portavimus imaginem terreni hominis sic portemus imaginem caelestis.* That is to say, if we will come to the love of God, as we have born here before the image of the earthly man, first

¹ Psa. xxxix. 6.

Adam, that is this image of sin, right so now that we might bear the image of the heavenly man Jhesu, which is the image of virtues.¹

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 49.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-SEVEN

How we should crucify this image of sin, and quicken the image of Jhesu.

WHAT shalt thou then do with this image ? I answer thee by a word that the Jews said to Pilate of Christ : *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum !*¹ Take thou this body of sin and do him upon the cross ; that is for to say, break down this image and slay the false love of sin in thyself. As Christ's body was y-slain for our trespass, right so thee behoveth if thou wilt be like to Christ, slay thy bodily liking and fleshly lust in thyself. Thus said Saint Paul : *Qui autem Christi sunt, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitiis et concupiscentiis.* These that are Christ's followers have crucified and slain their flesh, that is the image of sin, with all the lusts and the unreasonable likings of it.²

Slay then and break down pride and set up³ meekness ; also break down ire and envy and raise up love and charity to thine even-christian ; also in stead of covetise have poverty in spirit, in stead of accidie fervour of devotion with a glad readiness to all good deeds, and in the stead of

¹ John xix. 15. ² Gal. v. 24. ³ MS. 4, "raise upe."

gluttony and lechery sobriety and chastity in body and in soul. Thus counselled Saint Paul, when he said thus : *Deponentes veterem hominem cum suis actibus, qui corrumpitur secundum desideria erroris ; et induite novum hominem, qui secundum Deum creatus est in sanctitate et justitia.* Ye shall put down the old man, that is the image of sin of the old Adam with all his members, for he is rotten in desires of error, and ye shall shape you and clothe you in a new man, which is image of God, by holiness and righteousness and fullhead of virtues.¹ Who shall help thee break down this image ? Soothly thy Lord Jhesu. In the virtue and in the name of Him shalt thou break down this idol of sin. Pray Him busily, and desire, and He shall help thee.

¹ Eph. iv. 22, 24.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-EIGHT

What profit cometh of the keeping of the heart, and how much the soul is in what it loveth.

GATHER then thine heart together and do after the counsel of the Wise Man, when he saith thus : *Omni custodia serva cor tuum, quam quia ex ipso procedit vita.* With all thy business keep thine heart, for out of it cometh life ; ¹ and that is sooth when it is well kept, for then wise thoughts, clean affections, and burning desires of virtues and of charity and of the bliss of heaven come out of it, and make the soul for to live a blessed life. Also upon the contrary-wise if it be not kept, then as our Lord saith in the gospel : *De corde exeunt cogitationes malae, quae coinquinant hominem.* Bad thoughts and unclean affections come out of the heart, the which defoul a man, as our Lord saith.² They either injure the life of the soul by deadly sin or else they feeble the soul and make it sick if they be venial. For what is a man but his thoughts and his loves ? These only make a man good or bad. As mickle as thou lovest God and thine even-christian and

¹ Prov. iv. 23.

² Matt. xv. 19, 20.

knowest Him, so mickle is thy soul ; and if thou little love Him, little is thy soul ; and if thou nought love Him, nought is thy soul. It is nought as for good, but it is mickle as for sin. And if thou wilt wit what thou lovest, look whereupon thou thinkest ; for where thy love is there is the eye, and where thy liking is there is most the heart thinking. If thou love mickle God, thee liketh for to think mickle of Him ; and if thou love little then little thou thinkest of Him. Rule well thy thoughts and thine affections, and then art thou virtuous.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-NINE

How the image of sin shall be broken down.

BEGIN then on, and break down this image. When thou hast inwardly bethought of thyself and of thy wretchedness as I have said ; how proud, how vain, how envious, how melancholious, how covetous, how fleshly and how full of corruption ; also how little knowing feeling or savour thou hast of God, how wise, how quick and how mickle savour thou hast in earthly things, and shortly that thee thinketh thee as full of sin as the hide is full of flesh, be thou not adread too mickle, though thou think so of thyself. And when thou hast done thus, lift up the desire of thine heart to thy Lord Jhesu, and pray Him of help. Cry to Him by great desires and sighings, that He will help thee bear the heavy burden of this image, or else that He will break it. Think also what a shame it is to thee to be fed with swine's meat of fleshly savours, that shouldest seek a ghostly savour of heavenly joy. If thou do thus, then beginnest thou for to arise against the whole ground of sin in thee ; and it may so be that thou shalt feel pain and sorrow, for thou shalt understand that there may

no soul live without great pain, but if he have rest and delight either in his Creator or in a creature. Then when thou arisest against thyself by a fervent desire for to feel of thy Lord Jhesu, and for to draw thy love from all bodily things and from rest in thy bodily feeling, in so mickle that thou art encumbered of thyself and thee thinketh that all creatures rise against thee [and all thing which thou haddest delight in before turneth thee to pain]¹; and when thou forsakest thus thyself and thou mayest not lightly find comfort in Jhesu Christ,² needings thy soul shall suffer pain.³ Nevertheless, I expect whoso would suffer this pain awhile, steadfastly cleaving upon that [naked mind of Jhesu Christ and upon]⁴ desire that he would nought have but his Lord, and fall not lightly therefrom nor seek no comfort outward for a time, for it lasteth not long, our Lord⁵ is near and soon shall ease thy heart. For He will help thee bear thy body full of corruption, and He will [with His merciful might of His gracious presence]⁶ break down this false image of love in thyself; not all at once but little and little, till thou be some deal reformed to His likeness.

¹ Not in MSS. 4 and 10.

² MS. 2. "Readily find Jhesu ne fele comfort in hym that thou seekest." MSS. 4 and 10, "find confort in God."

³ MS. 2, "this may be called proprely the pain of syn."

⁴ Not in MSS. 2, 4, and 10.

⁵ MS. 2, "merciful and gracious." ⁶ Not in MSS. 4 and 10.

CHAPTER NINETY

How a man shall have him to the stirrings of pride and of all other vices.

AFTER such an whole arising against thyself, when it is passed thou shalt more soberly and more easily rule thyself and set thee more sadly for to keep thy thoughts and thine affections, for to know them whether they be good or bad. And then if thou feel a stirring of pride in any specie of it, be soon wary if thou mayest, and suffer it not lightly pass away ;¹ but take it in thy mind and rend it, break it, and despise it, and do all the shame that thou mayest thereto. Look thou spare it not nor trow it not, speak he never so fair, for it is false though it seem sooth, as the prophet saith : *Popule meus, qui te beatum dicunt ipsi te seducunt, et in errorem mittunt.* This is to say thus : Thou man of my people, they that say that thou art blessed and holy, they beguile thee and bring thee into error.² And if thou do thus often busily, thou shalt by the grace of [God]³ Jhesu within short time stop mickle of

¹ MS. 2, "suffre not hit eschape lightli away."

² Isa. iii. 12.

³ Not in MSS. 9 and 10.

the spring of pride and mickle abate the vain delight thereof, that thou shalt hardly feel it; when thou feelest it, it shall be so weak and as it were nearly dead that it shall not mickle hurt thee. And then shalt thou be able to have a ghostly sight of meekness, how good and how fair it is, and thou shalt desire it and love it for the goodness of itself, that thee shalt like for to be holden as thou art, and if need be for to suffer gladly despite and reproof for love of righteousness. Upon the self manner when thou feelest stirrings of ire, and melancholy rising of heart, or any evil will against thine even-christian for any manner cause, though it seem reasonable and for charity, beware of it and be ready with thy thought for to refrain it, that it turn not into fleshly appetite. Withstand it, and follow it not neither in word nor in deed, as mickle as thou mayest, but as he riseth smite him down again; and so shalt thou slay it with the sword of dread of God, that it shall not hurt thee. For wit thou well in all these stirrings of pride, vain glory, envy or any other, that all so speedily as thou perceivest it, and with displeasance of thy will and of thy reason thou withstandest it, thou slayest it, though it be so that it cleaveth still upon thine heart against thy will, and will not lightly pass away. Dread it not; for it letteth thy soul from peace but it defouleth not the soul. Right upon the same wise shalt thou do against

all evil stirrings of covetise, accidie, gluttony and lechery, that thou be aye ready with thy reason and with thy will for to reprove them and despise them.

CHAPTER NINETY-ONE

What thing helpeth most a man's knowing, and getteth him that he wanteth, and destroyeth sin in him.

AND that mayest thou do the better, and the more readily, if thou be busy for to set thine heart most upon one thing. And that thing is nought else but [our Lord Jhesu Christ, that blessed Person, God and man ; whom thou shalt set in the intent and in the meaning of thy soul as the light of thine heart, with great reverent dread for to displease Him, and with great]¹ ghostly desire to God for to please Him, for to love Him, for to know Him, for to see Him, and for to have Him by grace here in a little feeling, and in the bliss of heaven with a full being. This desire [thus grounded in Jhesu Christ]¹ if thou keep it, shall well tell thee which is sin and which is not, and which is good and which is better good. And if thou wilt fasten thy thought thereto, it shall teach thee all that thee needeth, and it shall get thee all that thee wanteth. And therefore when thou shalt arise against the ground of sin in general or else against any sin in special,

¹ Not in MSS. 4, 9 and 10.

hang fast upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest than upon the sin which thou reprovest ; for if thou do so, then fighteth Jhesu Christ for thee and He shall destroy sin in thee. Thou shalt mickle sooner come to thy purpose if thou do so, than if thou leave meek desire to God principally, and wilt set thine heart only against stirring of sin, as thou wouldest destroy it by mastery of thy self. Thou shalt never bring it so about ; but do as I have said, and better if thou mayest, and I expect by the grace of Jhesu thou shalt make the devil ashamed, and all such wicked stirrings thou shalt break away, that they shall not mickle harm thee. And upon this manner wise may this image of sin be broken down in thee and destroyed, by the which thou art forshapen from the kindly shape of the image of Christ. And thou shalt be shapen again to the image of Jhesu man by meekness and charity ; and then shalt thou be fully shapen to the self image of Jhesu God, here living by a shadow in contemplation, and in the bliss of heaven by full soothfastness.

Of this shaping to the likeness of Christ, speaketh Saint Paul thus : *Filioli, quos iterum parturio, donec Christus formetur in vobis.* My dear children, which I bear as a woman beareth a bairn until Christ be again shapen in you.¹ Thou hast conceived Christ by troth, and He hath life

¹ Gal. iv. 19.

in thee in as mickle as thou hast a good will and a desire for to serve Him and please Him, but He is not yet full shapen in thee, nor thou in Him by fullhead of charity. And therefore Saint Paul bare thee and me and other also with travail, as a woman beareth a child, unto the time that Christ have His full shape in us and we in Him.

CHAPTER NINETY-TWO

How a man shall be shapen to the image of Jhesu, and Jhesu shaped in him.

WHO so ween for to come to the working and the full use of contemplation and not by this way, that is for to say not [by steadfast mind of the precious manhood and the passion of Jhesu Christ nor]¹ by fullhead of virtues, he cometh not by the door, and therefore as a thief he shall be cast out. I say not but that a man may by gift of God have by times a tasting and a glimmering of life contemplative, some men in the beginning ; but the steadfast feeling of it shall he not have. For Christ is door and He is porter, and without His life and His livery may there no man come in, as He saith Himself : *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me.* No man cometh to the Father but by me.² That is for to say, no man may come to the contemplation of the Godhead, but he be first reformed by fullhead of meekness and charity to the likeness of Jhesu in His manhood.

¹ Not in MS. 9.

² John xiv. 6.

CHAPTER NINETY-THREE

Here is told the cause why this book was made, and how she shall have her in the reading that it was made for.

LO I have told thee a little, as me thinketh, first of contemplative life what it is, and then of the ways which by grace lead thereto. Not that I have it in feeling and in working as I have it in saying ; nevertheless I would by these words, such as they are, first stir mine own negligence for to do better than I have done, and also my purpose is for to stir thee or any other man or woman that have the state of life contemplative for to travail more busily and more meekly in that manner of life by such simple words as God hath given me grace for to say. And therefore if any word be therein that stirreth or comforteth thee more to the love of God, thank God, for it is His gift and not of the word. And if it comforteth thee not or else thou takest it not readily, study not too long thereabout ; but lay it beside thee till another time, and give thee to thy prayer or to other occupation. Take it as it will come, and not all at once. Also these words that I

write take them not too strictly, but there that thee thinketh by good avisement that I speak too shortly, either for lacking of English or wanting of reason, I pray thee mend it only where need is. Also these words that I write to thee, they long not all to a man which hath active life, but to thee or to any other which hath the state of life contemplative. The grace of our Lord Jhesu Christ be with thee. Amen.

EXPLICIT LIBER PRIMUS.

BOOK II

INCIPIT LIBER SECUNDUS.

CHAPTER ONE

How the soul of every rightful man is the image of God.

FOR as mickle as thou covetest greatly and askest it by charity, for to hear more of an image the which I have before times in party discried to thee, therefore I will gladly with dread fall to thy desire ; and helping the grace of our Lord Jhesu Christ, in Whom I fully trust, I shall open to thee a little more of this image. At the beginning if thou wilt wit plainly what I mean by this image, I tell thee forsooth that I understand nought else but thine own soul ; for thy soul and my soul and ilk a reasonable soul is an image, and that a worthy image, for it is the image of God, as the Apostle says : *Vir est imago Dei*. That is, man is the image of God, and made to the image and to the likeness of Him ;¹ not in the bodily shape without, but in the mights of it within ; as Holy Writ says : *Formavit Deus*

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 7.

hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem suam. That is, our Lord God shaped man in soul to His own image and likeness.¹ This is the image that I have spoken of. This image made to the image of God in the first shaping was wonderly fair and bright, full of burning love and ghostly light. But through sin of the first man Adam, it was disfigured and forshapen into another likeness, as I have before said. For it fell from that ghostly light and that heavenly food into that 'painful murkness and lust'² of this wretched life; exiled and cast out from the heritage of heaven that it should have had if it had stood still, into the wretchedness of this earth, and afterward into the prison of hell, there to have been without end. From the which prison to that heavenly heritage it might never have come again, but if it had been reformed to the first shape and the first likeness. But that reforming might not be made by none earthly man. For every man was in the same mischief, and none might suffice to help himself, and so mickle less any other man. Therefore it needed be done by Him that is more than a man, and that is only God; and that was reasonable, that He should reform and restore man to bliss if he should be saved, which of His endless goodness first shaped him thereto. How then it

¹ Gen. i. 27.

² MS. 9, "beestli lust."

might be reformed, and how it is reformed to the first likeness by Him that first formed it, by the grace of God shall I tell thee ; for that is the intent of this writing.

CHAPTER TWO

How the righteousness of God will not that a trespass be forgiven, but if amends be made.

[NOW shall I tell thee how]¹ the righteousness of God asks that a trespass done be not forgiven, but if amends be made for it, if it may be done. Now is it sooth mankind, that was wholly in Adam the first man, trespassed against God so wonder grievously when it forfeited the special bidding of Him, and assented to the false counsel of the fiend, that it deserved rightfully for to have been departed from him and damned to hell without end ; so far forth, that standing the righteousness of God it might not be forgiven, but if amends and full satisfaction were first made therefore. But this amends might no man make that was man only, and come out of Adam by kindly generation ; for this reason, for the trespass and unworship was endless great, and therefore it passed man's might for to make amends for it. And also for this reason ; he that has trespassed and shall make amends, him behoveth give to him that he has trespassed

¹ Not in MS. 9.

unto, all that he oweth though he had not trespassed, and also over that, him behoves give somewhat that he owe not, but only for that he trespassed. But mankind had not wherewith that he might pay God for his trespass, over that he owed Him. For what good deed that man might do in body or in soul, it was but his debt. For every man oweth, as the gospel says, for to love God with all his heart and all his soul and all his might ; and better might he not do than this. And nevertheless this deed sufficed not to the reforming of mankind, nor this might he not do but if he had been first reformed. Then needed it that if man's soul should be reformed and the trespass made good, that our Lord God Himself should reform this image and make amends for this trespass, since that no man might. But that might He not do in His Godhead ; for He might not nor owed not to make amends by suffering of pain in His own kind. Therefore it needed that He should take the same mankind that had trespassed, and become man ; and that might He not do by the common law of generation, for it was impossible God's Son to be born of a touched woman. Therefore He must become man through a gracious generation, by the working of the Holy Ghost, of a clean gracious maiden, our Lady Saint Mary. And so was it done. For our Lord Jhesu God's Son became man, and through His precious

death that He suffered made amends to the Father of heaven for man's guilt. And that might He well do, for He was God, and He owed not for Himself, but in as mickle as He was man born of the same kind that Adam was that first trespassed. And so though He owed it not for His own person, for Himself might not sin, nevertheless He owed it of His free will for the trespass of mankind, the which kind He took for salvation of man of His endless mercy. For sooth it is there was never man that might yield to God anything of his own that he owed not, but only this blessed Jhesu. For He might pay God one thing that He owed not as for Himself, and that was nought but one thing : that was for to give His precious life by wilful taking of death for love of soothfastness. This owed He not. As mickle good as He might do to the worship of God in His life, all was but debt. But for to take death for love of righteousness He was not bound thereto.

He was bound to righteousness, but He was not bound to die. For death is only a pain ordained to man for his own sin ; but our Lord Jhesu sinned never, nor He might not sin, and therefore He owed not for to die. Then since He owed not for to die and yet wilfully He died, then paid He to God more than He owed. And since that was the best man's deed¹ and most worthy that ever was done, therefore was it reasonable that the

¹ MS. 9, "best manere deede."

sin of mankind should be forgiven ; in as mickle as mankind had found a man of the same kind without venom of sin, that is Jhesu,¹ that might make amends for the trespass done and might pay our Lord God all that he owed. [And over, more, that he owed]² not. Then seeing that our Lord Jhesu, God³ and man, died thus for salvation of man's soul, it was rightful that sin should be forgiven and man's soul, that was His image, should be reformed and restored to the first likeness and to the bliss of heaven.

This passion of our Lord and this precious death is the ground of all the reforming of man's soul, without which might never man's soul have been reformed to the likeness of Him, nor come to the bliss of heaven. But blessed mote He be in all His working. Now is it so, that through the virtue of this previous passion the burning sword of cherubin that drove Adam out of paradise is now put away, and the endless gates of heaven are open to every man that will enter in thereto. For the person of Jhesu is both God and King of heaven, even in the bliss of the Father ; and as a man He is porter at the gate ready to receive ilk a soul that will be reformed here in this life to His likeness. For now may every soul, if that he will, be reformed to the likeness of God ; since that the trespass is for-

¹ MS. 2, "swete Jhesu."

² Not in MS. 2.

³ MS. 2, "oure swete Jhesu, veray God."

given and the amends through Jhesu is made for the first guilt. Nevertheless though this be sooth, all souls have not the profit nor the fruit of this precious passion, nor are not reformed to the likeness of Him.

CHAPTER THREE

How there be two manner of men that will not be reformed by the virtue of this precious passion of our Lord Jhesu Christ.

TWO manner of men are not reformed by virtue of this passion. One is of them that trow it not. Another is of them that love it not. Jews and paynims have not the benefice of this passion, for they trow it not. Jews trow not that Jhesu the Son of the Virgin Mary is God's Son of heaven. Also the paynims trow not that the sovereign Wisdom of God would become son of man, and in manhood suffer the pains of death. And therefore the Jews held the preaching of the cross and of the passion of Christ nought but scandal and blasphemy, and the paynims held it nought but phantom and folly. But true Christian men held it the sovereign Wisdom of God, and His great might. Thus said Saint Paul : *Praedicamus vobis Christum crucifixum, Judaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam : ipsis autem vocatis Judaeis, atque Graecis, Christum Dei virtutem, etc.* That is : We preach to you that we trow, that Jhesu Christ crucified, the son

of Mary, is God's Son, sovereign virtue and wisdom of God. The which Jhesu to Jews and paynims that trow not in Him is but scandal and folly.¹ And therefore these men by their untrowth put themselves from the reforming of their own soul, and standing their untrowth shall they never be saved nor come to the bliss of heaven. For sooth it is, from the beginning of the world unto the last end was there never man saved nor shall be saved, but if he had the trowth general or special in Jhesu Christ coming or come. For right as all chosen souls that were before the Incarnation under the Old Testament had trowth in Christ, that He should come and reform man's soul, either openly as patriarchs and prophets and other holy men had, or else privily and generally as children and other simple and imperfect souls had, that knew not specially the privity of the Incarnation : right so all chosen souls under the New Testament have trowth in Christ that He is come, either openly and feelingly as ghostly men and wise men have, or else generally as children that die christened and other simple and lewd souls have, that are nourished in the bosom of Holy Kirk. Since this is sooth, then think me that these men greatly and grievously err, that say that Jews and Saracens, by keeping of their own law, may be made safe though they trow not in Jhesu Christ as Holy Kirk trows ; in

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

as mickle as they ween that their own trowth is good and secure and sufficient to their salvation, and in that trowth they do as it seems many good deeds of righteousness, and peradventure if they knew that Christian faith were better than theirs is, they would leave their own and take it, that they therefore should be saved. Nay, it is not enough so. For Christ, God and man, is both way and end, and He is mediator betwixt God and man, and without Him may no soul be reconciled nor come to the bliss of heaven. [And therefore they that trow not in Him that He is both God and man, may never be saved nor come to bliss].¹ Other men also, that love not Christ nor His passion, are not reformed in their soul to the likeness of Him ; and these men are false Christian men, the which are out of charity and live and die in deadly sin. These men trow well as it seems that Jhesu is God's Son, and that His passion sufficeth to salvation of man's soul, and they trow also all the other articles of the faith [but it is an unshapely trowth, and a dead, for they love Him not, nor they choose not the fruits of His passion, but they lie still in their sin, and in the false love of this world unto their last end. And so be they not reformed to the likeness of God],¹ but go to the pains of hell endlessly, as Jews and Saracens do, and into mickle more pains than they in as mickle as they had

¹ Not in MS. 2. In text of MS. 9.

the trowth and kept it not. For that was more trespass than if they had never had it.

Then if thou wilt wit which souls are reformed here in this life to the image of God through virtue of His passion, soothly only those that trow in Him and love Him. In the which souls the image of God, that was through sin forshapen as it were into a foul beast's likeness, is restored and reformed to the first shape, and to the worthiness and the worship that it had in the beginning; without which restoring and reforming shall never soul be saved nor come to bliss.

CHAPTER FOUR

How the image of God, the which is man's soul, may be reformed in this life to His likeness.

NOW, sayest thou, how may this be sooth that the image of God, the which is man's soul, might be reformed here in this life to His likeness in any creature ? It seems nay, it might not be. For if it were reformed, then should it have stable mind, clear sight, and clean burning love in God and ghostly things aye lastingly, as it had in the beginning. But that is in no creature, as thou trowest, living here in this life. For as anent thyself, thou canst well say thee think thee full far therefrom. Thy mind, thy reason, and the love of thy soul are so mickle set in beholding and in love of earthly things, that of ghostly things thou feelest right little. Thou feelest no reforming in thy self, but thou art so belapped with this black image of sin for aught that thou mayst do, that upon what side thou turnest thee thou feelest thyself defouled and spotted with fleshly stirrings of this foul image. Other changing feelest thou none from fleshliness into ghostliness ; neither in the privy mights of thy

soul within, nor in bodily feeling without. Wherefore thee thinketh that it might not be that this image might be reformed ; or else if it might be reformed, then askest thou how it might be reformed. To this I answer and say thus. There is two manner of reforming of the image of God, which is man's soul. One is in fullness, another is in part. Reforming in fullness may not be had in this life, but it is delayed after this life to the bliss of heaven, where man's soul shall fully be reformed ; not to that state that it had at the first beginning by kind, or might have had through grace if it had stood whole, but it shall be restored to mickle more bliss and higher joy through the mickle mercy and the endless goodness of God, than it should have had if it had never fallen. For then shall the soul receive the whole and the fulfilling of God in all might of it, without medley of any other affection ; and it shall see mankind in the person of Jhesu above the kind of angels oned to the Godhead. For then shall Jhesu, both God and man, be all in all, and only He and none other but He, as the prophet saith : *Dominus solus exaltabitur in illa die*. That is, our Lord Jhesu in that day that is everlasting day shall be highed only, and none but He.¹ And also the body of man shall then be glorified, for it shall receive fully the rich dowry of undeadliness with all that

¹ Isa. ii. 11.

longeth thereto. This shall a soul have with the body, and mickle more than I can say ; but that shall be in the bliss of heaven, and not in this life. For though it be so that the passion of our Lord be cause of this full reforming of man's soul, nevertheless it was not His will for to grant this full reforming at once after His passion to all chosen souls that were living in time of His passion ; but He delayed it unto the last day, and that for this reason. Sooth it is that our Lord Jhesu of His mercy has ordained a certain number of souls to salvation, which number was not fulfilled in the time of His passion, and therefore it needed that by length of time through kindly generation of men it should be fulfilled. Then if it had so been that at once after the death of our Lord, every soul that would have trowed in Him should by belief have been blessed ¹ and full reformed without any other abiding, there would no creature that lived then have been, that he would not have received the faith, for to have been blessed. And then should generation have ceased ; and so should we that are now living, chosen souls, and other souls that come after us, not have been born, and so should our Lord have failed of His number. But that may not be. And therefore our Lord purveyed mickle better for us, in that that He delayed the full reforming of

¹ MS. 2, " shold be belue have been saved and blessed." MSS. 3 and 9, " anon sodeynly ha been blessed."

man's soul unto the last end, as Saint Paul says : *Deo pro nobis melius providente, ut non sine nobis consummarentur.* That is, Our Lord purveyed better for us in delaying of the reforming than if He had granted it then,¹ for this reason ; that the chosen souls here before should not make a full end without us that come after. Another reason is this. For since that man in his first forming of God was set in his free will and had free choosing, whether he would have fully God or none, it was therefore reasonable that since he would not choose God then, but wretchedly fell from Him, if he should afterward be reformed, that he should be set again in the same free choosing that he was first in, whether he would have the profit of his reforming or none. And this may be a reason why man's soul was not reformed fully, as fast after the passion of our Lord Jhesu Christ.

¹ Heb. xi. 40.

CHAPTER FIVE

How man's soul may be reformed in the likeness of Christ in two manners; that is in faith and in feeling.

ANOTHER reforming of this image is in part; and this reforming may be had in this life, and but it be had in this life, it may never be had, nor the soul never shall be saved. But this reforming is on two manners. One is in faith only, another is in faith and in feeling. The first, that is reforming in faith only, sufficeth to salvation; the second is worthy to have passing meed in the bliss of heaven. The first may be had lightly and in short time. The second may not be so, but through length of time and mickle ghostly travail. The first may be had with the feeling of the image of sin; for though a man feel nothing in himself but all stirrings of sin and fleshly desires, notwithstanding that feeling, if he wilfully assent not thereto he may be reformed in faith to the likeness of God. But the second reforming puts out the liking and the feeling of fleshly stirrings and worldly desires, and suffers none such spots abide in this image. The first reforming is only of beginning and profiting

souls, and of active men. The second is of perfect souls and of contemplative men. For by the first reforming the image of sin is not destroyed, but it is left as it were all whole in feeling. But the second reforming destroys the old feelings of this image of sin, and brings into the soul new gracious feelings through working of the Holy Ghost. The first is good, the second is better, but the third, that is in the bliss of heaven, is altogether best. First begin we to speak of the one and then of the tother ; and so shall we come to the third.

CHAPTER SIX

How a soul may lose his shape and his reforming through two manner of sins. One is original, another is actual.

TWO manner of sins makes a soul to lose the shape and the likeness of God. That one is called original, that is the first sin. That other is called actual, that is wilfully done sin. These two sins put a soul from the bliss of heaven and damn it to endless pain of hell, but if it be through the grace of God reformed to His likeness, or it pass hence out of this life. Nevertheless two remedies are there against these two sins, by the which a forshapen soul may be restored again. One is the sacrament of baptism against original sin. Another is the sacrament of penance against actual sin. A soul of a child that is born and is unchristened, because of original sin has no likeness of God ; he is nought but an image of the fiend and a brand of hell. But as soon as it is christened, it is reformed to the image of God, and through virtue of faith of Holy Kirk suddenly is turned from the likeness of the fiend and made like to an angel of heaven. Also the same falleth in a Jew or in a Saracen, the

which ere they be christened are nought but manacles of hell. But when they forsake their error and fall meekly to the truth in Christ, and receive the baptism of water in the Holy Ghost, soothly without any more tarrying they are reformed to the likeness of God. So fully, as Holy Kirk trows, that if they might as quickly after baptism pass out of this world, they should straight fly to heaven, without any more letting, had they done never so mickle sin before in the time of their untrowth, and never should they feel the pain of hell nor of purgatory : and that privilege should they have by the merit of the passion of Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How a soul that hath lost the likeness of Christ through deadly sin, yet through the sacrament of penance wilfully taken, he may be restored to the image and to the full likeness of Christ Jhesu.

ALSO what Christian man or woman that has lost the likeness of God through deadly sin, breaking God's commandments, if he through touching of grace soothfastly forsake his sins with sorrow and contrition of heart, and be in full will for to amend him and turn him to God and to good living, and in this will he receives the sacrament of penance if he may, or if he may not he is in will thereto : soothly I say that this man's soul or woman's, that was forshapen first to the likeness of the devil through deadly sin, is now by the sacrament of penance restored and shapen again to the image of our Lord God. This is a great courtesy of our Lord, and an endless mercy, that so lightly forgives all manner of sin, and so suddenly gives plenty of grace to a sinful soul that asks mercy of Him. He abides not great penance-doing nor painful fleshly suffering, or He forgive it. But He asks a loath-

ing of sin and a full forsaking in will of the soul for the love of Him, and a turning of the heart to Him. This asks He, for this gives He. And then when He sees this, without any delaying He forgives the sin and reforms the soul to His likeness. The sin is forgiven, that the soul shall not be damned. Nevertheless the pain debted for the sin is not yet fully forgiven, but if contrition and love be the more. And therefore shall he go and show him and shrive him to his ghostly father, and receive penance enjoined for his trespass and gladly fulfil it ; so that both the sin and the pain may be done away, or he pass hence. And that is the reasonable ordinance of Holy Kirk for great profit of man's soul ; that though the sin be forgiven through virtue of contrition, nevertheless in fulfilling of meekness and for to make whole satisfaction he shall if that he may show to his priest plenary confession. For that is his token and his warrant of forgiveness against all his enemies, and that is needful for to have. For if a man had forfeited his life against a king of this earth, it were not enough to him as for a full security for to have only forgiveness of the king, but if he have a charter the which may be his token and his warrant against all other men. Right so may it be said ghostly, if a man have forfeited against the King of Heaven his life through deadly sin, it is not enough to him to full security for to have forgiveness of

God only by contrition betwixt God and him, but if he have a charter made by Holy Kirk if he may come thereto. And that is the sacrament of penance, the which is his charter and his token of forgiveness. For since that he forfeited both against God and Holy Kirk, it is reasonable that he have forgiveness for the one and warrant for the other. And this is one reason why that confession is needful. Another reason is this ; for since this reforming of the soul stands in faith only, and not in feeling, therefore a fleshly man that is rude and boisterous and cannot deem lightly but outward of bodily things, should not have been able to have trowed that his sins had been forgiven him, but if he had some bodily token. And that is confession, through the which token he is made all secure of forgiveness if that he do that in him is. This is the truth of Holy Kirk, as I understand. Also another reason is this. Though the ground of forgiveness stand not principally in confession, but in contrition of the heart and in forethinking of sin, nevertheless I expect that there is many a soul that should never have felt very contrition, nor had full forsaking of sin, if confession had not been. For it falls oft times that in time of confession grace of compunction comes to a soul that before never felt grace, but aye was cold and dry, and far from feeling of grace. And for this, since confession was so profitable to the more part of Christian

men, Holy Kirk ordained for more security generally to all Christian men, that every man and woman should once in the year at the least be shriven of all their sins that come to their mind to their ghostly father, though they have had never so mickle contrition beforetime. Nevertheless, I expect well that if all men had been as busy about the keeping of themselves in fleeing of all manner of sin, and had come to as great knowing and feeling of God as some men have, that Holy Kirk should not have ordained the token of confession as for needful bond, for it had not needed. But for all men are not so perfect, and peradventure mickle of the more part of Christian men is unperfect, therefore Holy Kirk ordained confession by way of general bond to all Christian men that will know Holy Kirk as their mother and will be buxom to her bidding. If this be sooth, as I expect it is, then errs he greatly that generally says that confession of sins for to show a priest is neither needful to a sinner nor behoveable, and that no man is bound thereto. For by that that I have said, it is both needful and speedful to all souls that in this wretched life are defouled through sin, and namely to those that are through deadly sin forshapen from the likeness of God ; the which may not be reformed to His likeness, but by the sacrament of penance, that principally stands in contrition and sorrow of heart, and secondarily in shrift of mouth following

after, if it may be had. Upon this manner by the sacrament of penance is a sinful soul reformed to the image of God and to His likeness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

How a soul that is reformed through the sacrament of penance must stand stably in the faith of Holy Church.

BUT this reforming standeth in faith and not in feeling ; for right as the property of faith is for to trow that thou seest not, right so it is for to trow that thou feelest not. But he that is reformed in his soul by the sacrament of penance to the image of God, he feeleth no changing in himself, neither in his bodily kind without, nor in the privy substance of his soul within, other than he did. For he is as he was unto his feeling, and he feels the same stirrings of sin and the same corruption of his flesh in passions and worldly desires rising in his heart, as he did before. And nevertheless shall he trow that he is through grace reformed to the likeness of God, though he neither feel it nor see it. He may well feel sorrow for his sin, and a turning of his will from sin to cleanness of living, if that he have grace and take good care of himself. But he may neither see nor feel the reforming of his soul, how it is wonderly and unperceivably changed from the filth of a fiend to the fairhead

of an angel, through a privy gracious working of our Lord God. That may he not see, but he shall trow it ; and if he trow it, then is his soul reformed in truth. For right as Holy Kirk troweth by the sacrament of baptism soothfastly received a Jew or a Saracen or a child born is reformed in soul to the likeness of God through a privy unperceivable working of the Holy Ghost, notwithstanding all the fleshly stirrings of his body of sin, the which he shall feel after his baptism as well as he did before ; right so by the sacrament of penance meekly and truly received, a false Christian man that has been encumbered in deadly sin all his lifetime is reformed in his soul within unperceivably, out-taking a turning of his will through a privy might and a gracious working of the Holy Ghost, that suddenly works and in time of a moment or a twinkling of an eye rights a froward soul, and turns it from ghostly filth to fairness unseeable, and of a servant of the fiend makes a son of joy, and the prisoner of hell makes a perceiver of heavenly heritage, notwithstanding all the fleshly feeling of this sinful image that is the bodily kind. For thou shalt understand that the sacrament of baptism or of penance is not of that virtue for to let and destroy utterly all the stirrings of fleshly lusts and painful passions, that a man's soul never felt no manner rising nor stirring of them no time. For if it were so, then were a soul fully reformed here to

the worship of the first making ; but that may not be fully in this life. But it is of that virtue that it cleanseth the soul from all the sins before done ; and if it be departed from the body, saves it from damnation, and if it dwell in the body, it gives the soul grace to withstand the stirring of sin. And it keeps it in grace also, that no manner of lustly stirrings or of passions that it feels in the flesh, be it never so grievous, shall hurt it, nor depart it from God, as long as it wilfully assents not thereto. Thus Saint Paul meant when he said thus : *Nichil damnationis est iis qui sunt in Christo, qui non secundum carnem ambulant, etc.* That is : Those souls that are reformed to the image of God in faith, through the sacrament of baptism or of penance, shall not be damned for feelings of this image of sin if it so be that they go not after the stirrings of the flesh by fulfilling of deed.¹

¹ Rom. viii. 1.

CHAPTER NINE

That we should believe steadfastly reforming of this grace, if our conscience witness, to be a full forsaking of sins and a true turning of our will to good living.

OF this reforming in faith speaks Saint Paul thus : *Justus ex fide vivit*. The righteous man lives in faith.¹ That is, he that is made rightful by baptism or by penance he lives in faith, the which sufficeth unto salvation and to heavenly peace, as Saint Paul says : *Justificati ex fide, pacem habeamus ad Deum*. That is, we that are righted and reformed through faith in Christ have peace and accord made betwixt God and us,² notwithstanding the vicious feelings of our body of sin.

For though this reforming be privy and may not well be felt here in this life, nevertheless whoso trows it steadfastly and shapes his works busily for to accord to his trowth, and that he turn not again to deadly sin, soothly when the hour of death cometh and the soul is departed from this bodily life, then shall he find it sooth that I say now. Thus said Saint John in comfort of chosen souls that live here in faith under the feeling of

¹ Heb. x. 38.

² Rom. v. 1.

this painful image : *Carissimi, et nunc sumus filii Dei ; sed nondum apparuit quid erimus ! Scimus quoniam cum Christo apparuerit, tunc apparibimus cum eo, similes ei in gloria.* That is, My dear friends, we are right now while that we live here the sons of God, for we are reformed by faith in Christ to His likeness ; but it sheweth not yet what we are, but it is all privy. Nevertheless we know well that when our Lord shall show Him at the last day, then shall we appear with Him like unto Him in endless joy.¹ If thou wilt wit then if thy soul be reformed to the image of God or no, by that I have said thou mayest have an entry. Ransack thine own conscience and look what thy will is, for therein standeth all. If it be turned from all manner of deadly sin, that thou wouldest for nothing wittingly and wilfully break the commandment of God, and for that thou has misdona here before against His bidding, thou hast shriven thee thereof meekly, with full heart to leave it and with sorrow that thou didst it, I say then surely that thy soul is reformed in faith to the likeness of God.

1 John iii. 2.

CHAPTER TEN

How a soul that is fully reformed to the image of God, seeketh all that he may to flee all manner sin and to keep him in perfect charity of the love of God and of his even-christian.

IN this reforming that is only in faith, the most part of chosen souls lead their life, that set their will steadfastly for to flee all manner of deadly sin, and for to keep them in love and charity to their even-christian and for to keep the commandments of God upon their cunning. And when it so is, that wicked stirrings and ill wills rise in their hearts, of pride or of envy, of ire or of lechery, or of any other head sin, they withstand them and strive against them by displeasing of will, so that they follow not in deed these wicked wills. And nevertheless if they fall lightly as it were against their will through frailty or uncunning, anon their conscience grieveth them and paineth them so grievously that they may have no rest till they be shriven and may have forgiveness. Soothly all these souls that thus live I expect are reformed in faith to the image of God. And if they live in this reforming and be found

therein the hour of their death, they shall be saved and come to the full reforming in the bliss of heaven, though it be so that they never might have ghostly feeling nor inly savour nor special grace of devotion in all their lifetime. For else, if thou say that no soul shall be safe but if it were reformed into ghostly feeling that it might feel devotion and ghostly savour in God, as some souls do through special grace, then should few souls be saved in regard of multitude of other.

Nay, it is not for to trow that for those souls that only are devout, and by grace come to ghostly feeling, and for no more, our Lord Jhesu should have taken mankind and suffered the hard passion of death. It had been a little purchase to Him for to have come from so far to so near, and from so high to so low, for so few souls. Nay, His mercy is spread larger than so. Nevertheless, on the contrary wise, if thou trow that the passion of our Lord is so precious and His mercy is so mickle that there shall no soul be damned and namely of no Christian man, do he never so ill, as some fools ween, soothly thou errest greatly. Therefore go in the mean and hold thee in the midst, and trow as Holy Kirk troweth. And that is that the most sinful man that liveth in earth, if he turn his will through grace from deadly sin with soothfast repentance to the service of God, he is reformed in his soul, and if he die in that state he shall be saved. Thus behight our

Lord by His prophet, saying thus : *In quacumque hora conversus peccator et ingemuerit, vita vivet et non morietur.* That is ; In what time that it be that the sinful man is turned to God from sin and he have sorrow, therefore he shall live, and he shall not die endlessly.¹ Also on that other side, who so lieth in deadly sin, and will not leave it nor amend him thereof, nor receive the sacrament of penance, or else if he receive it he taketh it not soothfastly for love of God, that is for love of virtue and cleanness, but only for dread or shame of the world, or else for dread only of pains of hell, he is not reformed to the likeness of God. And if he die in that plight he shall not be saved. His trowth shall not save him, for his trowth is a dead trowth and lacketh love, and therefore it serveth him nought. But they that have trowth quickened with love and charity are reformed to the likeness of God, though it be the least degree of charity ; as are simple souls, the which feel not the gift of special devotion nor ghostly knowing of God, as some ghostly men do, but trow generally as Holy Kirk troweth, and wit not fully what that is, for it needeth not to them. And in that trowth they keep them in love and charity to their even-christian as mickle as they may, and flee all deadly sins after their cunning, and do the deeds of mercy to their even-christian. All these belong to the bliss of heaven, for it is

¹ Ezek. xviii. 21.

written in the Apocalypse thus : *Qui timetis Deum, pusilli et magni, laudate eum.* This is, ye that dread God, both small and great, thank Him.¹

By great are understood souls that are profiting in grace, or else perfect in the love of God, the which are reformed in ghostly feeling. By small are understood souls unperfect, of worldly men and women and other, that have but a child's knowing of God and full little feeling of Him, but are brought forth in the bosom of Holy Kirk and nourished with the sacraments as children are fed with milk. All these shall love God, and thank Him for salvation of their souls by His endless mercy and goodness. For Holy Kirk, that is mother of all these and hath tender love to all her children ghostly, prayeth and asketh for them all tenderly of her spouse that is Jhesu, and getteth them health of soul through virtue of His passion. And namely for them that cannot speak for themselves by ghostly prayer for their own need. Thus I find in the gospel that the woman of Canaan asked of our Lord health to her daughter that was travailed with a fiend, and our Lord made first refusal because that she was an alien. Nevertheless she ceased not for to cry, till our Lord had granted her her asking and said to her thus : O woman, mickle is thy trowth ; be it to thee right as thou wilt. And in the same hour was her daughter whole.

¹ Rev. xix. 5.

This woman betokeneth Holy Kirk, that asketh help of our Lord for simple uncunning souls, that are travailed with temptation of the world and cannot speak perfectly to God by fervour of devotion nor burning love in contemplation ; and though it seem that our Lord repelleth her first because that they are as it were alien from Him, nevertheless for the great trowth and desert of Holy Kirk He granteth to her all that she will. And so are these simple souls, that trow steadfastly as Holy Kirk trows, and put them fully in the mercy of God and meek them under the sacraments and the laws of Holy Kirk, made safe through prayer and trowth of their ghostly mother, which is Holy Kirk.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

That souls reformed need ever to fight and strive against stirrings of sin while they live here, and how a soul may wit when it assenteth to stirrings and when not.

THIS reforming in faith is lightly begeten, but it may not so lightly be holden. And therefore what man or woman that is reformed to the likeness of God in trowth, mickle travail and business must they have if they will keep this image whole and clean, that it fall not down again through weakness of will to the image of sin. He may not be idle nor reckless, for the image of sin is so near fastened to him and so continually presseth upon him by diverse stirrings of sin, that but if he be right wary he shall full lightly through assent fall again thereto. And therefore him needeth aye be striving and fighting against wicked stirrings of this image of sin, and that he make none accord therewith, nor take no friendship with it, for to be buxom to its unreasonable biddings ; for if he do, he beguileth himself. But soothly if he strive with it, him needeth not mickle dread of assenting, for strife breaketh peace and false accord. It is good that

a man have peace with all things, save with the fiend and with this image of sin, for against them him needeth aye fight in his thought and in his deed until he have gotten over them the mastery. And that shall never be fully in this life, as long as he beareth and feeleth this image. I say not but that a soul may through grace have the higher hand over this image, so far forth that it shall not follow nor assent to the unreasonable stirrings of it. But for to be so clean delivered from this image, that it should feel no suggestion nor jangling of no fleshly affection, nor of vain thought no time, may no man have in this life.

I expect that a soul that is reformed in feeling by ravishing of love into contemplation of God, may be so far from the sensuality and from vain imagination, and so far drawn out and departed from the fleshly feeling for a time, that it shall nought feel but good ; but that lasteth not aye. And therefore say I that ilk man behoveth strive against this image of sin, and namely he that is only reformed in faith, that so lightly may be deceived therewith. In the person of which men Saint Paul saith thus : *Caro concupiscit adversus spiritum et spiritus adversus carnem*. That is, a soul reformed to the likeness of God fights against the fleshly stirrings of this image of sin, and also this image of sin striveth against the will of the spirit.¹ This manner of fighting of this

¹ Gal. v. 17.

double image Saint Paul knew when he said thus : *Inveni legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meae, et captivum me ducentem in legem peccati.* That is, I have found two laws in myself, one law in my soul within, and another in my fleshly limbs without fighting with it, that oft leadeth me as a wretched prisoner to the law of sin.¹ By these two laws in a soul I understand this double image : by the law of the Spirit I understand the reason of the soul when it is reformed to the image of God, by the law of the flesh I understand the sensuality, which I call the image of sin. In these two laws a soul reformed leadeth his life, as Saint Paul saith : *Mente enim servio legi Dei, carne autem, legi peccati.* In my soul, that is in my will and in my reason, I serve to the law of God. But in my flesh, that is in my fleshly appetite, I serve to the law of sin.² Nevertheless that a soul reformed shall not despair, though he serve to the law of sin by feeling of the vicious sensuality against the will of the spirit because of corruption of the bodily kind, Saint Paul excuseth it saying thus of his own person : *Non enim quod volo bonum hoc ago ; sed malum quod odi, hoc facio. Si autem malum quod odi, hoc facio, non ego operor illud, sed quod habitat in me, peccatum.* I do not that good that I would do, that is I would feel no fleshly stirring, and that do I not ; but

¹ Rom. vii. 23.

² Rom. vii. 25.

I do that evil that I hate, that is the sinful stirrings of my flesh. I hate and yet I feel them. Nevertheless, since it is so that I hate the wicked stirrings of my flesh, and yet I feel them and often delight in them against my will, they shall not be imputed against me for damnation, as if I had done them. And why? for the corruption of this image of sin doth them, and not I.¹

Lo! here Saint Paul in his own person comforteth all souls that through grace are reformed in faith, that they should not too mickle dread the burthen of this image with the unreasonable stirrings thereof, if it so be that they assent not wilfully thereto. Nevertheless in this point many souls that are reformed in trowth are oft-times mickle tormented, and troubled in vain. As thus: When they have felt fleshly stirrings of pride, of envy, of covetise, or of lechery, or of any other capital sin, they wit not sometimes whether they assented to them or no. And that is no great wonder, for in time of temptation a frail man's thought is so troubled and so overlaid that he hath no clear sight nor freedom of himself, but is taken often with liking unwarily and goeth forth a great while ere than he perceive it. And therefore fall some in doubt and in dread whether they sinned in time of temptation or no.

As anent this point I say as me thinks, that a soul may have assaying in this manner whether

¹ Rom. vii. 19, 20.

that he assented or no. If it so be that a man is stirred to any manner of sin, and the liking is so great in his fleshly feeling that it troubleth his reason and as it were with mastery occupyeth the affection of the soul, nevertheless he keepeth him, that he followeth it not in deed nor he would not if he might, but is rather to him painful for to feel the liking of that sin and fain he would put it away if he might, and then when the stirring is overpassed he is glad and well paid that he is delivered of it; by this assay may he wit that were the liking never so great in the fleshly feeling, that he assented not nor sinned not, namely deadly. Nevertheless a remedy there is that is secure to such a simple soul that is marred in itself and cannot help itself: that he be not too bold in himself, utterly weening that such fleshly stirrings with liking are no sins, for he might so fall into recklessness and into false security. Nor also that he be not too dreadful nor too simple in wit, for to deem them all as deadly sins, nor as great venials, for neither is sooth. But that he hold them all as sins and wretchedness of himself, and that he have sorrow for them, and be not too busy for to deem them neither deadly nor venial, but if his conscience be greatly grieved that he hastily go and show to his confessor in general or in special such stirrings; and namely that ill stirring that beginneth to fasten root in the heart and most occupieth it,

for to draw it down to sin and worldly vanities. And when he is thus shriven generally or specially, trow steadfastly that they are forgiven, and dispute no more about them that are passed and forgiven whether they were deadly or venial, but that he be more busy for to keep him better against them that are coming. And if he do thus, then may he come to rest in conscience.

But some are then so fleshly and so uncunning that they would feel or hear or see the forgiveness of their sins, as openly as they may feel or see a bodily thing ; and for as mickle as they feel not so they fall often in such distrusts and doubts of themselves and never may come to rest. And in that are they not wise, for faith goeth before feeling. Our Lord said to a man that was in palsy when He healed him thus : *Confide fili, dimittuntur tibi peccata tua*. That is : Son, trow steadfastly thy sins are forgiven thee.¹ He said not to him, see or feel how thy sins are forgiven thee, for forgiveness of sin is done ghostly and unseeably through the grace of the Holy Ghost ; but trow it. Right on the same wise ilk a man that will come to rest in conscience, him behoveth first if he do that in him is trow without ghostly feeling forgiveness of his sins ; and if he first trow it, he shall afterward through grace feel it, and understand it, that it is so. Thus said the Apostle : *Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis*.

¹ Mark ii. 5.

That is, but if thee first trow, thee may not understand. Trowth goeth before and understanding cometh after. The which understanding, that I call the sight of God if it be gracious, a soul may not have but through great cleanness, as our Lord saith: *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.* Blessed be clean of heart, for they shall see God.¹ That is, they shall see God, not with their fleshly eye but with the inner eye, that is understanding cleansed and illumined through grace of the Holy Ghost, for to see soothfastness. The which cleanness a soul may not feel but if he have stable trowth going before: as the Apostle saith: *Fide mundans corda eorum.* That is, Our Lord cleanseth the hearts of His chosen through faith.² Therefore it is needful that a soul trow first the reforming of himself made through the sacrament of penance, though he see it not, and that he dispose himself fully for to live righteously and virtuously as his trowth asketh, so that he may after come to the sight and to the reforming in feeling.

¹ Matt. v. 8.

² Acts xv. 9.

CHAPTER TWELVE

That this image is both fair and foul while it is in this life, though it be reformed ; and of diversity of feelings privily had between these souls that be reformed and other that be not.

FAIR¹ is then a man's soul, and foul is a man's soul. Fair in as mickle as it is reformed in faith to the likeness of God. But it is foul in as mickle as it is yet meddled with fleshly feelings and unreasonable stirrings of this foul image of sin. Foul without as it were a beast, fair within like to an angel. Foul in feeling of the sensuality, fair in trowth of the reason. Foul for the fleshly appetite, fair for the good will. Thus fair and thus foul is a chosen soul, saying in Holy Writ thus: *Nigra sum, sed formosa, filiae Jerusalem sicut tabernacula Cedar et sicut pelles Salomonis.* That is : I am black but I am fair and shapely, ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tabernacles of cedar, as the skin of Solomon.² That is : The angels of heaven, that are daughters of the high Jerusalem, wondereth not on me nor despise me not for my black shadow, for though I be black

¹ MS. 2 "and lovely."

² Cant. i. 4.

without because of my fleshly kind, as is a tabernacle of cedar, nevertheless I am full fair within as the skin of Solomon, for I am reformed to the likeness of God. By cedar is understood murkness, and that is the devil. By a tabernacle of cedar is understood a reproved soul, the which is a tabernacle of the devil. By Solomon, that betokeneth peaceable, is understood our Lord Jhesu, for He is peace and peaceable. By the skin of Solomon is understood a blessed angel, in whom our Lord dwelleth and is hid, as life is hid within the skin of a quick body, and therefore is an angel likened to a skin. Then may a chosen soul with meek trust in God and gladness of heart say thus : Though I be black because of my body of sin, as is a reproved soul that is one of the tabernacles of the fiend, nevertheless I am within well fair through trowth and good will, like to an angel of heaven. For so saith he in another place : *Nolite considerare me quod fusca sim, quia decoloravit me sol.* That is : Behold me not that I am swart, for the sun hath defaced me.¹ The sun maketh a skin swart only without and not within, and it betokeneth this fleshly life. Therefore saith a chosen soul thus : Reprove me not for I am swart, for the swartness that I have is all without, of touching and of bearing of this image of sin. But it is nothing within. And therefore soothly though it be so

¹ Cant. i. 5.

that a chosen soul reformed in faith dwell in this body of sin, and feel the same fleshly stirrings and use the same bodily works as doth a tabernacle of cedar, so far forth that in man's deem there should no difference be betwixt the one and the tother, nevertheless within in their souls there is full great diversity, and in sight of God there is full mickle difference. But the knowing of this, which is one which is other, is only kept to God ; for it passeth man's doom and man's feeling, and therefore we should no man deem as ill for that thing that may be used both evil and well. For a soul that is not reformed is taken so fully with the love of the world, and so mickle overlaid with the liking of his flesh in all his sensuality, that he chooseth it as full rest of his heart ; and in his privy meaning he would nought else have, but that he might aye be secure thereof. He feeleth no liquor of grace stirring him for to loathe this fleshly life nor for to desire heavenly bliss. And therefore I may say that he beareth not this image of sin, but he is borne of it ; as a man that were sick and so weak that he might not bear himself, and therefore he is laid in a bed and borne in a litter. Right so such a sinful soul is so weak and so unmighty for lacking of grace, that he may neither move hand nor foot for to do any good deed, nor for to withstand by displeasing of will the least stirring of sin when it cometh, but it falleth down thereto

as doth a beast upon a carrion. But a soul that is reformed, though he use his fleshly wits and feel fleshly stirrings, nevertheless he loatheth them in his heart, for he would for nothing fully rest in them. But he fleeth the rest as the biting of an adder, and had liefer have his rest and the love of his heart in God, if that he could ; and sometime desireth thereto, and often irketh of the liking of this life for love of the life aye lasting.

This soul is not borne in this image of sin as a sick man, though he feel it ; but he beareth it. For through grace he is made mighty, and strong for to suffer and bear his body with all the ill stirrings of it, without hurting or defouling of himself ; and that is in as mickle as he loveth them not, nor followeth them not, nor assenteth not to them, the which are deadly sins, as another doth.

This was bodily fulfilled in the gospel of a man that was in the palsy and was so feeble that he might not go, and therefore was he laid and borne in a litter and brought to our Lord, and when our Lord saw him in mischief, of His goodness He said to him thus : *Surge et tolle grabatum tuum, et vade in domum tuam.* That is : Rise up and take thy bed and go into thy house.¹ And so he did, and was whole. And soothly right as this man bare upon his back when he was made whole the bed that before bare him, right so it

¹ John v. 8.

may be said ghostly, that a soul reformed in faith beareth this image of sin, the which bare him before. And therefore be not adread too mickle of thy blackness that thou hast of bearing of this image of sin. But as against the shame and the discomfort that thou hast of the beholding of it, and also against upbraiding that thou feelest in thy heart of thy ghostly enemies, when they say to thee thus : Where is thy Lord Jhesu ? What seekest thou ? Where is thy fairness that thou speakest of ? What feelest thou aught but blindness and sin ? Where is that image of God that thou sayest is reformed in thee ? Comfort thyself then by trowth stiffly, as I have before said ; and if thou do so, thou shalt by this trowth destroy all the temptations of thine enemies. Thus said the Apostle Paul : *Accipe scutum fidei, in quo tela hostis nequissima poteris extinguere.* That is : Take to thee a shield of steadfast trowth, through the which thou mayest quench all the burning darts of thine enemy.¹

¹ Eph. vi. 16.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Of three manner men, of the which some be not reformed, and some be reformed only in faith, and some in faith and in feeling.

BY this that I have before said, mayest thou see that after diverse parties of the soul are diverse states of men. Some men are not reformed to the likeness of God, and some are reformed only in faith, and some men are reformed in faith, and in feeling.

For thou shalt understand that a soul hath two parts. The one is called the sensuality ; that is the fleshly feeling by the outward wits, the which is common to man and to beast. Of the which sensuality, when it is unreasonably and inordinately ruled, is made the image of sin, as I have before said. For then is the sensuality sin, when it is not ruled after reason. That other part is called reason, and that is departed in two ; in the over part, and in the nether part. The over part is likened to a man, for it should be master and sovereign ; and that

is properly the image of God, for by that only the soul knoweth God and loveth Him. And the nether is likened to a woman, for it should be buxom to the overer party of reason, as woman is buxom to man. And that lieth in knowing and ruling of earthly things, for to use them discreetly after need and for to refuse them when it is no need ; for to have aye with it an eye upward to the overer part of reason, with dread and with reverence for to follow it. Now may I say that a soul that liveth after the likings and the lusts of his flesh, as it were an unreasonable beast, and neither hath knowing of God nor desire to virtues nor to good living, but is all blinded in pride, fretted in envy, overlaid with covetise and defouled with lechery and other great sin, is not reformed to the likeness of God. For it lieth and resteth fully in the image of sin, that is the sensuality. Another soul that dreadeth God and withstandeth deadly stirrings of the sensuality and followeth them not, but liveth reasonably in ruling and governance of worldly things and sets his intent and his will for to please God by his outward works, is reformed to the likeness of God in faith, and though he feel the same stirrings of sin as that other did it shall not hurt him ; for he resteth not in them as the other doth. But another soul that fleeth through grace all deadly stirrings of the sensuality and venials also, so far forth

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that he feeleth them not, is reformed in feeling. For he followeth the overer party of reason in beholding of God and ghostly things, as I shall tell thee after.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

How men that be in sin forshape themselves into divers beasts' likeness; and they be clepped the lovers of this world.

A WRETCHED man is he then that knoweth not the worthiness of his soul nor will not know it. How it is the most worthy creature that ever God made, out-taking an angel whom it is like to, high above all other bodily kind, to the which nothing may suffice as full rest but only God; and therefore he should nothing love nor like but Him only, nor covet nor seek but how he might be reformed to His likeness. But for he knoweth not this, therefore he seeketh and coveteth his rest and his liking outward in bodily creatures worse than himself is. Unkindly he doth, and unreasonably he worketh, that leaveth the sovereign good and aye-lasting life that is God unsought and unloved, unknown and unworshipped, and chooseth his rest and his bliss in a passing delight of an earthly thing. Nevertheless thus do all the lovers of this world, that have their joy and their bliss in this wretched life. Some have it in pride and vain glory of

themselves, that when they have lost the dread of God they travail and study night and day how they might come to worship and praising of the world ; and make no force how it be, so that they might come thereto and overpass all men either in clergy or in craft, in name or in fame, in riches and in reverence, in sovereignty and mastership, in high state and lordship. Some men have their delight and their rest in riches, and in outrageous having of earthly goods, and set their hearts so fully for to get it, that they seek nought else, but how they might come thereto. Some have their liking in fleshly lust of gluttony and lechery, and in other bodily uncleanness, and some in one thing and some in another. And thus wretchedly these do that thus forshape themselves from the worthiness of man, and turn them into diverse beasts' likeness.

The proud man is turned into a lion for pride, for he would be dreaded and worshipped of all men, and that no man withstood the fulfilling of his fleshly will, neither in word nor in deed ; and if any man would let his misproud will, he waxeth fell and wrath, and will be wreaked of him as a lion wreaketh him on a little beast. This man that doth thus is no man, for he doth unreasonably against the kind of man, and so is he turned and transformed into a lion. Envious and angry men are turned into hounds through

wrath and envy, that bark against their even-christian, and bite them by wicked and malicious words, and grieve them that have not trespassed with wrongful deeds, harming them in body and in soul against God's bidding. Some men are forshapen into asses, that are slow in the service of God, and evil willed for to do any good deed to their even-christian. They are ready enough for to run to Rome for worldly profit and for earthly worship, or for pleasaunce of an earthly man. But for ghostly meed, for help of their own souls, or for worship of God, they are soon irked. They will not thereof, and if they aught do they go but a pace and with a froward will. Some are turned into swine, for they are so blind in will and so beastly in manners, that they have no dread of God, but follow only the lusts and likings of their flesh, and have no regard to the honesty of man, for to rule them after the bidding of reason, nor for to restrain the unreasonable stirrings of the fleshly kind ; but as soon as a fleshly stirring of sin cometh, they are ready for to fall thereto, and follow it as swine doth. Some men are turned into wolves that live by raven as false covetous men do, that through mastery and oppression robbeth their even-christian of their worldly goods. Some men are turned into foxes, as false men and deceitful that live in treachery, and in guile.

All these and many other more, that live not

in dread of God but break His commandments, forshape themselves from the likeness of God, and make them like to beasts. Yea, and worse than beasts, for they are like unto the fiend of hell. And therefore soothly, these men that live thus, if they be not reformed when the hour of death cometh and the souls of them are departed from the bodies, then shall their eyes be opened that is now stopped with sin, and then shall they feel and find the pain of their wickedness that they lived in here. And for as mickle as the image of God was not reformed through the sacrament of penance in them, neither in faith nor in feeling here in this life, they shall be as cursed, cast out from the blessed face of our Creator, and they shall be damned with the devil into the deepness of hell; there for to be aye without end. Thus saith John in the Apocalypse : *Timidis, et incredulis, et exsecratis, et homicidis, fornicatoribus, veneficis et idololatriis et omnibus mendacibus, pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne et sulphure.* That is, to proud men and mistrowing, to cursed and to manslaughterers, to lecherous and covetous, to poisoners, worshippers of idols, and to all false liars, their dole shall be with the devil in the pit of hell burning with fire and brimstone.¹ If the lovers of this world would often think on this, how all this world shall pass and draw to an end, and how all

¹ Apoc. xxi. 8.

wicked love shall be hard punished, they should within short time loathe all worldly lust, that they now most like. And they should lift up their heart for to love God, and they would busily seek and travail how they might be reformed to His likeness or they passed hence.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

How lovers of this world unable them in divers manners to the reforming of their own souls.

BUT now say some of them thus : “ I would fain love God, and be a good man and forsake the love of the world if that I might ; but I have no grace thereto. If I had the same grace that a good man hath, I should do as he doeth ; but for I have it not, therefore I may not, and so it is not me to wit, but I am excused.” Unto these men I say thus : Sooth it is as they say, that they have no grace and therefore they lie still in their sin and may not rise out. But that availeth them not, nor excuseth them not against God, for it is their own default. They unable them by divers ways so mickle, that the light of grace may not shine to them nor rest in their hearts. For some are so froward that they will no grace have, nor they will no good men be ; for they wit well if that they should be good men, they must needs forbear the great liking and the lust of this world that they have in earthly things. And that will they not, for them thinketh it is so sweet that they would not forego it. And also they

must take works of penance, as fasting, waking, praying, and other good deeds doing in chastising of their flesh, and in withdrawing of their fleshly will ; and that may they not do, for it is made so sharp and so dreadful to their thinking that they dread and loathe for to think thereupon, and so cowardly and wretchedly dwell they still in their sin.

Some would have grace as it seemeth, and begin for to able them thereto ; but their will is wonder weak, for as soon as any stirring of sin cometh, though it be contrary to the bidding of God, they fall anon thereto, for they are so bound through custom by often falling and often assenting to sin before, that them think it impossible for to withstand it, and so feigned hardness of performing weakeneth their will, and smiteth it down again.

Some also feel stirring of grace, as when they have biting of conscience for their ill living, and that they should leave it. But that is so painful to them and so heavy, that they will not suffer it nor abide with it, but they flee therefrom and forget it if they may ; so far forth that they seek liking and comfort outward in fleshly creatures, so that they should not feel this biting of conscience within in their soul.

And overmore some men are so blind and so beastly that they ween there be none other life but this, nor that there is no soul of man other

than of a beast, but that the soul of man dieth with the body as the soul of a beast. And therefore they say, Eat we, drink we, and make we merry here, for of this life be we secure. We see none other heaven. Soothly such are some wretches that say thus in their hearts, though they say it not with their mouth. Of the which men the prophet saith thus : *Dixit insipiens in corde suo : Non est Deus.* That is, the unwise man said in his heart, there is no God.¹

This unwise man is every wretched man that liveth, and loveth sin and chooseth the love of this world as rest of his soul. He saith that there is no God ; not with his mouth, for he will speak of Him some time when he fareth well fleshly, as it were in reverence, when he saith, Blessed be God, some time in dispute when he is angry against God or his even-christian, and sweareth by His blessed body or any of His members. But he saith in his thought that there is no God, and that is either for that he weeneth that God seeth not his sin, or that He will not punish it so hard as Holy Writ saith, or that He will forgive him his sin though he leave it not, or else that there shall no Christian man be damned do he never so evil, or else if he fast our Lady fast,² or say ilk a day a certain orison or hear ilk a day two masses or three or do a

¹ Psa. xiv. 1.

² i.e., Fast on Saturday, in honour of the Blessed Virgin.

certain bodily deed as it were in worship of God, he shall never go to hell, do he never so mickle sin, though he forsake it not. This man saith in his heart there is no God, but he is unwise as the prophet saith. For he shall feel and find in pain that He is a God whom he forgat and set nought by in weal of this world, as the prophet saith. *Sola vexatio dabit intellectum auditui.* That is, only pain shall give understanding ; ¹ for he that knoweth not this here, nor will not know, shall well know it when he is in pain.

¹ Isa. xxviii. 19.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A little conceit how lovers of this world should do if they would be reformed in their soul before they part hence.

THESE men, though they wit well that they are out of grace and in deadly sin, they have no care nor sorrow nor thought therefore. But they make fleshly mirth and worldly solace as mickle as they may, and the further that they be from grace, the more mirth they make. And perchance some hold them well paid that they have no grace, that they may as it were the more fully and freely follow the liking of fleshly lusts ; as though God were asleep and might not see them. And this is one of the most defaults. And so by their own frowardness they stop the light of grace from their own soul, that it may not rest therein ; the which grace, in as mickle as in it is, shineth to all ghostly creatures, ready for to enter in where it is received, as the sun shineth over all bodily creatures where it is not letted. Thus saith Saint John in the gospel. *Lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt.* That is, the light of grace shineth in murkness, that is to men's hearts that are murk

through sin ; but the murknesses take it not.¹ That is, these blind hearts receive not that gracious light nor have not the profit of it. But right as a blind man is all belapped with light of the sun when he standeth therein, and yet seeth he it not, nor hath no profit thereof for to go thereby, right so ghostly a soul blinded with deadly sin is all belapped with this ghostly light, and yet he is never the better, for he is blind and will not see nor know his blindness. And that is one of the most lettings of grace, that a wretched man will not acknowledge his own blindness for pride of himself ; or else if he knoweth it, he chargeth it not but maketh merry and game as he were over all secure.

Therefore unto all these men that are thus blinded and bounded with the love of this world and are so foul forshapen from the fairhead of man, I say and counsel that they think on their soul, and that they able them to grace as mickle as they may. And that may they do upon this wise, if that they will. When they feel themselves out of grace and overlaid with deadly sin, then that they think what mischief and what peril it is to them for to be out of grace and departed from God as they be ; for there is nothing that holdeth them from the pit of hell that they should not at once fall therein, but one bare single thread of this bodily life whereby they hang. What lightlier may be lost than a

¹ John i. 5.

single thread may be broken in two ? For were the breath stopped in their body, and that may lightly fall, their soul should pass forth and anon be in hell without end. And if they would think thus, they should quake and shake for dread of the rightful dooms of God and of the hard punishing of sin ; and they should sorrow and mourn for their sin and for lacking of grace. And then should they cry and pray that they might have grace, and if they did thus, then should grace fall in them, and put out murkness and hardness of heart and weakness of will, and give them might and strength for to forsake the false love of this world as mickle as is deadly sin. For there is no soul so far from God through wickedness of will in deadly sin, I undertake none that liveth in this body of sin, that he may not through grace be righted and reformed to cleanness of living, if he will bow his will to God with meekness for to amend his life, and heartily ask grace and forgiveness of Him, and excuse our Lord and fully accuse himself. For Holy Writ saith : *Nolo mortem pectoris, sed magis ut convertatur et vivat.* That is, our Lord saith : I will not the death of a sinner, but I will more that he be turned to Me and live.¹ For our Lord wills that the most froward man that liveth forshapen through sin, if he turn his will and ask grace, that he be reformed to His likeness.

¹ Ezech. xxxiii 11.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

That reforming in feeling and in faith may not suddenly be got, but by grace and much bodily and ghostly travail in length of time.

THIS reforming is in faith, as I have before said, that lightly may be had. But after this cometh reforming in faith and in feeling, that may not so lightly be gotten, but through long travail and mickle business. For reforming in faith is common to all chosen souls, though they be but in the lowest degree of charity. But reforming in feeling is specially of those souls that may come to the state of perfection, and that may not suddenly be had. But after great plenty of grace and mickle ghostly travail a soul may come thereto ; and that is when he is first healed of his ghostly sickness, and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with fire of desire, and new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling.

For sooth it is, right as a man is brought near to the dead through bodily sickness, though he

receive a medicine by the which he is restored and secure of his life, he may not therefore at once rise up and go to work as an whole man may ; for the feebleness of his body holds him down, that he must abide a good while, and keep him well with medicines, and diet him by measure after the teaching of a leech till he may fully recover bodily health. Right so ghostly he that is brought to ghostly death through deadly sin, though he through medicine of the sacrament of penance be restored to life, that he shall not be damned, nevertheless he is not at once whole of all his passions and of all his fleshly desires, nor able to contemplation. But him behoveth abide a great while and take good care of himself, and rule him so that he might recover full health of soul, for he shall langour a great while or than he be fully whole. Nevertheless if he take medicines of a good leech and use them in time with measure and discretion, he shall mickle the sooner be restored to his ghostly strength, and come to reforming in feeling.

For reforming in faith is the lowest state of all chosen souls, for beneath that might they not well be ; but reforming in feeling is the highest state in this life that the soul may come to. But from the lowest to the highest may not a soul suddenly start, no more than a man that will climb upon an high ladder and setteth his foot upon the lowest stave, may at the next fly up to

the highest ; but him behoveth go by process one after another, till he may come to the overest. Right so it is ghostly ; no man is made suddenly sovereign in grace, but through long exercise and sly working a soul may come thereto, namely when He helpeth and teacheth a wretched soul in whom all grace lieth, for without special help and inwardly teaching of Him may no soul come thereto.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

One cause why so few souls in regard of the multitude of other come to this reforming in faith and in feeling.

BUT now sayst thou, since our Lord is so courteous of His goodness, and of His gracious gifts so free, wonder it is then that so few souls as it seemeth in regard of the multitude of other, may come to this reforming in feeling. It seemeth that He were estranged, and that is not sooth ; or that He took no regard at His creatures, the which by taking of faith are become His servants. Unto this I may answer and say as me thinketh, that one cause is this. Many men that are reformed in faith set not their hearts for to profit in grace, nor for to seek none higher state of good living through busy travail in praying and thinking and other bodily and ghostly working ; but them think it enough to them to keep themselves out of deadly sin, for to stand still in that plight as they are in. For they say that is enough to them for to be saved and have the least degree in heaven ; they will covet no more.

Thus perchance do some of the chosen souls that lead in the world active life ; and that is

little wonder of them, for they are so occupied with worldly busyings that needeth for to be done, that they may not fully set their hearts for to profit in ghostly working. And nevertheless it is perilous to them, for they fall out and in all day, and are now up and now down, and may not come to stableness of good living. Nevertheless they are somewhat excusable, for their state of living. But other men and women that are free from worldly business if they will, and may have their needful sustenance without great bodily business, as specially religious men and women may that bind themselves to the state of perfection by taking of religion, and other men also in secular state that have mickle reason and great kindly wit, and might if they would dispose them thereto come to mickle grace ; these men are more for to blame for that they stand still as they were idle, and will not profit in grace, nor no further seek for to come to the love and the knowing of God.

For soothly it is perilous to a soul that is reformed only in faith, and will no more seek nor profit nor give him busily to bodily and ghostly travail ; for he may so lightly lose that he hath and fall again to deadly sin. For a soul may not stand still alway in one state while that it is in the flesh ; for it is either profiting in grace, or impairing in sin. For it fareth by him, as it doth by a man that were drawn out of a pit, and when he

were up, he would no further go than the pit's brink. Soothly he were a mickle fool, for a little puff of wind or one unwarily stirring of himself should soon cast him down again worse than he was before. Nevertheless if he flee from the brink as far as he may, and go forth on the earth, then though there come a great storm he is the more secure, for he falleth not in the pit. Right so ghostly he that is drawn out of the pit of sin through reforming of faith, and when he is out of deadly sin he thinketh him secure enough, and therefore he will not profit but hold him still as he is by the pit's brink as near as he may. Soothly he is not wise ; for at the least temptation of the enemy or of his flesh he falleth into sin again. But nevertheless if he flee from the pit, that is, if he set his heart fully for to come to more grace and for to travail busily how he may come there-to, and give him heartily to praying, thinking, and other good works doing, though great temptations rise against him, he falleth not lightly to deadly sin again.

And soothly it is wonder to me, that since grace is so good and so profitable, why a man when he hath but a little thereof, yea ! so little that he might no less have, that he will say " Ho ! I will no more of this, for I have enough." When I see a worldly man, though he have of worldly goods mickle more than him needeth, yet he will never say, " Ho ! I have enough, I will no more of

this.” But he will aye covet more and more, and travail all his wits and his mights, and never will stint of his covetise till he may have more. Mickle more then should a chosen soul covet ghostly good, that is aye lasting and maketh a soul blessed ; and he never should cease of his coveting if he did well, get what he get might. For he that most coveteth, most shall have ; and soothly if he did thus, he should profit and wax in grace greatly.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Another cause also of the same, and how wilful bodily customs indiscreetly regarded and used, sometime hindereth souls from feeling of more grace.

ANOTHER cause is this. Some men that are reformed in faith in the beginning of their turning to God, set themselves in a certain manner of doing, whether it be bodily or ghostly, and think aye for to keep that manner of working forth, and not for to change it for none other that cometh through grace, though it were better. For they ween that that doing should be best for them alway for to hold ; and therefore they rest them therein, and through custom they bind them so thereto, that when they have fulfilled it they think them wonder well eased, for they ween that they have done a great thing to God. And perchance if it fall that they be letted from their custom, though it be for a reasonable cause, they be heavy and angry and have troubling of conscience ; as if they had done a great deadly sin. These men hinder themselves somewhat from feeling of more grace, for they set their perfection in a bodily work, and so they make an

end in the midst of the way, where none end is.

For why, bodily customs that men use in their beginning are good, but they are but means and ways, leading a soul to perfection ; and therefore he that sets his perfection in a bodily work, or in a ghostly work that he feeleth in the beginning of his turning to God, and he will no further seek but aye rest therein, he hindereth himself greatly. For it is a simple craft that a prentice is aye alike wise in, and that can on the first day as mickle of it, as he can twenty winter after ; or else if the craft be good and subtle, he is of a dull wit or else of an evil will, that profiteth not therein. But then is it sooth that of all crafts that are, the service of God is the most sovereign and most subtle, the highest and hardest for to come to the perfection of it ; and also it is most profitable and most oft repaying to him that may soothfastly perform it. And therefore it seemeth that the prentices of it that are aye alike farforth in learning, either are dull-witted or else evil willed.

I reprove not these customs that men use in the state of beginning, whether they be bodily or ghostly, for I say that they are full good and speedful for them for to use. But I would that they held them not but as a way and an entry toward ghostly feeling, and that they used them as a convenable mean, till better come, and that they in the using of them coveted after better ;

and then if better come that were more ghostly and more drawing in the thought from fleshliness and from the sensuality and vain imagination, and that should be letted because of their customs ; that they leave then their custom, when it may be left without scandal or distress of other, and follow that they feel. But if neither let other, then that they use both if they may. I mean not of customs needful through bond of law, or of rule, or of penance, but of other wilfully taken. Thus teacheth us the prophet in the psalter, saying thus, *Etenim benedictionem dabit legislator, ibunt de virtute in virtutem, videbitur Deus deorum in Syon*. That is: Soothly the bringer of the law shall give His blessing, they shall go from virtue into virtue, and God of Gods shall be seen in Syon.¹ The bringer of the law, that is our Lord Jhesu Christ, shall give His blessing ; that is, He shall give His gifts of grace to His chosen souls, calling them from sin and righting them by good works to His likeness ; through which grace they shall profit and wax from virtue to virtue till they come to Syon. That is till they come to contemplation, in the which they shall see God of Gods ; that is, they shall see well that there is nought but one God, and they shall see that there is nought but God.

¹ Psa. lxxxiv. 7.

CHAPTER TWENTY

How a man that will come to perfection must have mickle travail and cleanness of heart.

NOW, sayest thou, since it so is that reforming in faith is so low and so perilous for to rest in, because of dread of falling again, and reforming in feeling is so high and so secure, whoso might come thereto : then covetest thou for to wit what manner travail were most speedful for to use by the which a man might profit in and come thereto, or if there were any certain travail or special deed by the which a man might come to that grace and that reforming in feeling. As unto this, I say thus : thou wost well that what man or woman will dispose him for to come to cleanness of heart and to feeling of grace, him behoveth have mickle travail, and great fighting in will and in work lastingly against wicked stirrings of all the capital sins. Not only against pride or envy, but against all the other with all the species that come out of them, as I have said before in the first part of this writing. For why, passions and fleshly desires let the cleanness in the heart and peace in conscience. And him

behoveth also travail for to get all virtues ; not only chastity and abstinence, but also patience and mildness, charity and meekness, and all the other. And this may not be done by one manner of work, but by divers works and many, after sundry dispositions of men. As now praying, now thinking, now working some good work, now assaying himself in diverse wises ; in hunger, in thirst, in cold, in suffering of shame and despite if need be, and in other bodily distresses for love of virtue and soothfastness. This knowest thou well, for this readest thou in every book that teacheth of good living. Thus also saith ilk man that will stir men's souls to the love of God. And so it seemeth that there is no special travail nor certain deed through the which only a soul might come to that grace ; but principally through grace of our Lord Jhesu, and by many deeds and great in all that he may do, and yet all is little enough.

And one reason may be this : for since our Lord Jhesu Himself is special master of this craft, and He is special leech of ghostly sickness, for without Him all is nought ; therefore it is reasonable that after that He teacheth and stirreth, so a man follow and work. But he is a simple master that cannot teach his disciple whilst he is in learning but aye one lesson, and he is an unwise leech that by one medicine will heal all sores. Therefore our Lord Jhesu, that is so

wise and so good, for to show His wisdom and His goodness He teacheth sundry lessons to His disciples, after that they profit in their learning, and giveth to sundry souls sundry medicines after the feeling of their sickness. And also another reason is this : if there were one certain deed by the which a soul might come to the perfect love of God, then should a man ween that he might come thereto by his own work and through his own travail, as a merchant cometh to his meed by his own travail only, and by his own work. Nay, it is not so ghostly in the love of God. For he that will serve God wisely and come to the perfect love of God, he shall covet to have none other meed but Him only. But then, for to have Him may no creature deserve only by his own travail ; for though a man might travail as mickle bodily and ghostly as all creatures that ever were might, he might not deserve only by his works for to have God for his meed. For He is sovereign bliss and endless goodness, and passeth without comparison all men's deserts ; and therefore He may not be gotten by no man's special work, as bodily meed may. For He is free and giveth Himself where He will and when He will, neither for this work nor for that, nor in this time nor after that time ; for though a soul work all that he can and may, all his lifetime, perfect love of Jhesu shall he never have, till our Lord Jhesu will freely give it. Nevertheless on the

tother side I say also, that I expect He giveth it not, but if a man work and travail all that he can and may, yea till he thinketh he may no more, or else be in full will thereto if he might.

And so it seemeth that neither grace only without full working of a soul that in it is, nor working alone without grace, bringeth a soul to reforming in feeling ; the which reforming standeth in perfect love and charity. But that one joined to that other, that is grace joined to working, bringeth into a soul the blessed feeling of perfect love, the which grace may not rest fully but on a meek soul, that is full of dread of God. Therefore may I say that he that hath not meekness nor doth not his business may not come to this reforming in feeling. He hath not full meekness that cannot feel of himself soothfastly as he is ; as thus, he that doth all the good deeds that he can, as in fasting, waking, wearing of the hair and all other suffering of bodily penance, or doth all the outward works of mercy to his even-christian, or else inward as praying, weeping, sighing, and thinking : if he rest aye in them, and lean so mickle to them and regardeth them so greatly in his own sight that he presumeth of his own deserts, and thinketh himself aye rich and good, holy and virtuous ; soothly as long as he feeleth thus, he is not meek enough. Nor though he say or think that all that he doth is of God's gift and not of himself, he is not yet

meek enough ; for he may not make himself yet naked of all his good deeds, nor make himself poor soothfastly in spirit, nor feel himself nought, as he is. And soothly until a soul can feelably through grace nought himself, and bare him from all the good deeds that he doth through beholding of soothfastness of Jhesu, he is not perfectly meek.

For what is meekness but soothfastness ? Soothly, nought else ; and therefore he that through grace may see Jhesu, how that He doth all, and himself doth right nought but suffereth Jhesu work in him what him liketh, he is meek. But this is full hard, and as it were impossible and unreasonable to a man that worketh all by man's reason and seeth no further, for to do many good deeds and then for to account them all to Jhesu, and set himself at nought. Nevertheless whoso might have a ghostly sight of soothfastness, him should think it full true and full reasonable for to do so. And soothly he that hath this sight shall never do the less, but he shall be stirred for to travail bodily and ghostly mickle the more and with the better will. And this may be one cause why some men peradventure swink and sweat and pain their wretched body with outrageous penance all their lifetime, and are aye saying orisons and psalters and many other beads, and right may they not come to that ghostly feeling of the love of God, as it seemeth

that some men do in short time with less pain ; for they have not that meekness that I speak of.

Also on that other side I say, he that doth not his business may not come to the feeling of grace. He doth not his business that thinketh thus : Whereto should I travail ? Whereto should I pray or think, wake or fast, or any other bodily penance do for to come to such grace, since it may not be gotten nor had, but only of the free gift of Jhesu ? Therefore I will abide in fleshliness as I am, and right nought do of such works bodily nor ghostly until He give it ; for if He will give it, He asketh no working of me. What so that I do, and how little I do, I shall have it. And if He will not give it, travail I never so fast therefore, I get it never the sooner. He that saith thus, may not come to this reforming. For he draweth himself wilfully to idleness of fleshlihood, and unableth him to the gift of grace ; in as much as he putteth from him both inward working that standeth in lasting desire and in longing to Jhesu, and outward working by travail of his body in outward deeds. So may he not have it.

Therefore I say that he that hath not true meekness nor full hearty business ; either inward only by great fervour and lasting desire and busy prayer and thought in God, or else both inward and outward, may he not come to this ghostly reforming of his image.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

That a man that will come to Jerusalem, that is understood the City of Peace, the which is Contemplation, must hold him low in meekness and in faith, and suffer distresses both bodily and ghostly.

NEVERTHELESS for thou covetest for to have some manner working by the which thou mightest be rather nigher to that reforming, I shall say thee as me thinketh by the grace of our Lord Jhesu, the shortest and the readiest help that I know in this working. And how that shall be, I shall tell thee by example of a good pilgrim, upon this wise.

There was a man that would go to Jerusalem ; and for he knew not the way he came to another man that he hoped knew the way thither, and asked whether he might come to that city. That other man said to him that he might not come thither without great trouble and mickle travail, for the way is long and perils are great of thieves and robbers, and many other lettings there be that fall to a man in the going. And also there are many several ways, as it seemeth, leading thitherward ; but men all day are slain and

despoiled and may not come to that place that they covet. Nevertheless there is one way, the which whoso taketh it and holdeth it, he would undertake that he should come to the City of Jerusalem, and he should never lose his life nor be slain, nor die for default. He should often be robbed and evil beaten and suffer mickle distress in the going, but he should aye have his life safe.

Then saith the pilgrim : If it be so that I may have my life safe and come to that place that I covet, I charge not what mischief I suffer in the going ; and therefore say me what thou wilt, and soothly I behote for to do after thee. That other man answers and says thus : Lo, I set thee in the right way. This is the way, and that thou keep the lesson that I teach thee. What so thou hearest or seest or feelest that should let thee in thy way, abide not with it wilfully, tarry not for it restfully, behold it not, like it not, dread it not ; but aye go forth in thy way, and think that thou wouldest be at Jerusalem. For that thou covetest, that thou desirest, and nought else but that. And if man rob thee and despoil thee, beat thee, scorn thee, and despise thee, strive not again if thou wilt have thy life. But hold thee with the harm that thou hast and go forth as nought were, that thou take no more harm. And also if men will tarry thee with tales and feed thee with falsehoods, for to draw thee to mirths and for to leave thy pilgrimage, make deaf ear, and

answer not again, and say nought else but that thou wouldest be at Jerusalem. And if men proffer thee gifts and will make thee rich with worldly good, attend not to them ; think aye on Jerusalem. And if thou wilt hold this way and do as I have said, I undertake thy life that thou shalt not be slain, but thou shalt come to that place that thou covetest.

Ghostly to our purpose, Jerusalem is as mickle for to say as sight of peace, and betokeneth contemplation in perfect love of God. For contemplation is not else but a sight of Jhesu, which is very peace. Then if thou covet for to come to this blessed sight of very peace and be a true pilgrim to Jerusalem-ward, though it be so that I were never there, nevertheless as farforth as I can I shall set thee in the way thitherward. The beginning of the high way in the which thou shalt go is reforming in faith, grounded meekly in the faith and in the laws of Holy Kirk, as I have said before ; for trust securely, though thou hast sinned here-before, if thou be now reformed by the sacrament of penance after the law of Holy Kirk, that thou art in the right way. Now then, since thou art in the sure way, if thou wilt speed in thy going and make good journeys thee behoveth to hold these two things often in thy mind : meekness and love. That is ; I am nought, I have nought, I covet nought, but one. Thou shalt have the

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✓ meaning of these words in thine intent and in habit of thy soul lastingly, though thou have not specially these words aye formed in thy thought, for that needeth not. Meekness saith, I am nought, I have nought. Love saith, I covet nought but one, and that is Jhesu. These two strings, well fastened with the mind of Jhesu, maketh good accord in the harp of the soul, when they be craftily touched with the finger of reason ; for the lower thou smitest upon that one, the higher soundeth that other. The less thou feelest that thou art or that thou hast of thyself through meekness, the more thou covetest for to have of Jhesu in desire of love. I mean not only of that meekness that a soul feeleth in the sight of his own sin or frailties and wretchedness of this life, or of the worthiness of his even-christian, for though this meekness be soothfast and medicinable, nevertheless it is boisterous and fleshly as in regard, not clean nor soft nor lovely. But I mean also this meekness that the soul feeleth through grace, in sight and beholding of the endless being and the wonderful goodness of Jhesu ; and if thou mayst not see it yet with thy ghostly eye, that thou trow it. For through sight of his being either in full faith or in feeling thou shalt hold thyself not only as the most wretch that is, but also as nought in substance of thy soul, though thou haddest never done sin. And that is lovely meekness ; for in regard of

Jhesu that is soothfastly all, thou art right nought. And also that thou think that thou hast right nought ; but art as a vessel that standeth aye empty¹ as nought were therein, as of thyself ; for do thou never so many good deeds outward or inward, till thou have and feel that thou hast the love of Jhesu, thou hast right nought. For with that precious liquor only, may thy soul be fulfilled, and with none other. And for as mickle as that thing alone is so precious and so worthy, therefore what thou hast or what thou dost hold it as nought for to rest in, without the sight and the love of Jhesu. Cast it all behind thee and forget it, that thou might have that that is the best of all.

Right as a true pilgrim going to Jerusalem leaveth behind him house and land, wife and child, and maketh himself poor and bare from all that he hath, that he might go lightly without letting : right so if thou wilt be a ghostly pilgrim, thou shalt make thyself naked from all that thou hast, that are both good deeds and bad, and cast them all behind thee, that thou be so poor in thine own feeling that there be nothing of thine own working that thou wilt lean upon restingly, but aye desiring more grace of love and aye seeking the ghostly presence of Jhesu. And if thou do thus, then shalt thou set in thy heart wholly and fully, that thou wouldest be at Jeru-

¹ MS. 9, "ai tome or voide."

saalem and at none other place but there. And that is, thou shalt set in thine heart wholly and fully, that thou wouldest nothing have but the love of Jhesu, and the ghostly sight of Him as He will show Him ; for to that only thou art made and bought, and that is thy beginning and thine end, thy joy and thy bliss. And therefore whatsoever that thou have, be thou never so rich in other deeds bodily and ghostly, but if thou have that, and know and feel that thou hast it, hold that thou hast right nought. Print well this reason in the meaning of thy heart, and cleave soberly thereto ; and it shall save thee from all perils in thy going, that thou shalt never perish, and it shall save thee from thieves and robbers, the which I call unclean spirits, that though they spoil thee and beat thee through divers temptations thy life shalt aye be safe. And shortly if thou keep it as I shall say thee, thou shalt escape all perils and mischiefs and come to the City of Jerusalem within short time.

Now thou art in the way and knowest what the place hight whither thou shalt draw to. Begin then for to go forth in thy journey. Thy forthgoing is nought else but ghostly working, and bodily also when need is ; which thou shalt use by discretion upon this wise. What work that it be that thou should do, after the degree and the state that thou standest in bodily or ghostly, if it help this gracious desire

that thou hast for to love Jhesu, and make it more whole, more easy, and more mighty to all virtues and to all goodness, that work hold I best ; be it preaching, be it thinking, be it reading, be it working ; and as long as that work strengtheneth most thine heart and thy will to the love of Jhesu, and furtherest draweth thine affection and thy thought from worldly vanity, it is good for to use it. And if it be so, that through use savour of that lesseth, and thee thinketh another work savoureth thee more, and thou feelest more grace in another, take another and leave that. For though thy desire and the yearning of thine heart to Jhesu should be aye unchangeable, nevertheless thy ghostly works, that thou shalt use in praying or thinking for to feed and nourish thy desire, may be divers and may well be changed after that thou feelest thee disposed through grace in applying of thine own heart.

For it fareth by works and by desire, as it doth by sticks and by a fire. For the more sticks are laid to the fire, the greater is the fire ; right so the more divers ghostly working that a man hath in his thought for to keep whole his desire, the mightier and the more burning shall his desire be to God. And therefore look wisely what work thou canst best do, and that most helpeth thee for to save whole this desire to Jhesu, if thou be free, and art not bound but

under the common law ; and that do. Bind thee not to wilful customs unchangeably, that should let the freedom of thine heart for to love Jhesu if grace would visit thee specially. For I shall tell thee which customs are aye good and needful to be kept. Lo, such custom is aye good for to hold that standeth in getting of virtue and letting of sin, and that custom should never be left, for thou shalt aye be meek and patient, sober and chaste if thou well do, and so of all other virtues. But the custom of another thing that letteth a better is for to leave when time is, where a man may. As thus, if a man have in custom for to say thus many beads, or for to think this manner of thought thus long time, or for to wake or kneel thus long, or any other such bodily deed, this custom is for to leave sometimes when reasonable cause letteth, or else if more grace come in other way.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

How a man that is in this way shall have enemies to drive him against ; and how he shall overcome them by the knowing of our Lord Jhesu, and shrift of mouth and contrition of heart and satisfaction in deed.

NOW art thou in the way, and wost how thou shalt go. Now beware of enemies that will be busy for to let thee if they may. For their intent is to put out of thine heart that desire and that longing that thou hast to the love of Jhesu, and for to drive thee home again to love of worldly vanity, for there is nothing that grieveth them so mickle. These enemies are principally fleshly desires and vain dreads, that rise out of thine heart through corruption of thy fleshly kind, and would let thy desire of the love of God, that they might fully and restfully occupy thine hearts ; these are thy next enemies. Also other enemies there are, as unclean spirits that are busy with sleights and wiles for to deceive thee. But one remedy shalt thou have that I said before ; what so it be that they say, trow them not, but hold forth thy way, and only desire the love of Jhesu. Answer aye thus : I am nought, I have

nought, I covet nought, but only the love of Jhesu.

If thine enemies say to thee first thus, by stirrings in thine heart, that thou art not shriven aright, or there is some old sin hid in thy heart that thou knowest not, nor were never shriven of, and therefore thee must turn home again and leave thy desire, and go shrive thee better : trow not this saying, for it is false, for thou art shriven. Trust securely that thou art in the way, and thee needeth no more ransacking of shrift for that that is passed ; hold forth thy way and think on Jerusalem. Also if they say that thou art not worthy for to have the love of God, whereto shalt thou covet that thou might not have, nor art not worthy thereto ; trow them not, but go forth, and say thus : “ Not for I am worthy, but for I am unworthy, therefore would I love God ; for if I had it, that should make me worthy. And since I was made thereto, though I should never have it, yet will I covet it, and therefore will I pray and think that I might get it.” And then if thine enemies seeth that thou beginnest to wax bold and well willed to thy work, they begin to wax afeard of thee.

Nevertheless they will not cease of vexing when they may as long as thou art going in the way, what with dread and menacing on that one side, what with flattering and false pleasing on that other side, for to make thee break thy purpose and turn home again. They will say thus :

“ If thou hold forth thy desire to Jhesu so fully travailing as thou beginnest, thou shalt fall into sickness, or into fantasies, or into frenzies, as thou seest that some do, or thou shalt fall into poverty and bodily mischief, and no man shall will to help thee ; or thou might fall into privy temptations of the fiend, that thou shalt not be able to help thyself. For it is wonder perilous to any man for to give him fully to the love of God, and leave all the world, and nothing covet but only the love of Him ; for so many perils may fall that a man knoweth not of. And therefore turn home again and leave this desire, for thou shalt never bring it to the end ; and do as other worldly men do.”

Thus say thine enemies, but trow them not, but hold forth thy desire, and say nought else but thou wouldest have Jhesu, and be at Jerusalem. And if they perceive then thy will so strong that thou wilt not spare for sin nor for sickness, for fantasies, nor frenzy, for doubts nor dread of ghostly temptations, for mischief nor for poverty, for life nor for death ; but aye forth thou wilt with one thing, and nothing but one, and makest deaf ear to them as though thou heard them not, and holdest thee forth stiffly in thy prayers and in thine other ghostly works without stinting, with discretion after counsel of thy sovereign or of thy ghostly father, then begin they for to be wrath and to go a little near thee.

They begin for to rob thee and beat thee and do thee all the shame that they can. And that is, when they make that all the deeds that thou dost, be they never so well done, are deemed of other men as ill and turned into the worse part. And whatsoever it be, that thou wouldest have done in help of thy body or of thy soul, it shall be letted or hindered by other men ; so that thou shalt be put from thy will in all thing that thou reasonably covetest. And all this they do that thou shouldest be stirred to ire or melancholy or evil will against thine even-christian.

But against all these distresses and all other that may fall use this remedy. Take Jhesu in thy mind and anger thee not with them, tarry not with them, but think on thy lesson, "That thou art nought, thou hast nought, thou may nought lose of earthly good, and thou covetest nought but the love of Jhesu," and hold forth thy way to Jerusalem, with thine occupation. And nevertheless if thou be vexed some time through frailty of thyself : with such un-eases that fall to thy bodily life through evil will of man or malice of the fiend, as soon as thou mayest come again to thyself, leave off the thinking of that distress and go forth to thy work. Abide not too long with them for dread of thine enemies.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Of a general remedy against wicked stirrings and painful vexings that fall to their hearts, of the flesh, of the world, and of the fiend.

AND after this, when thine enemies see that thou art so well willed, that thou art not angry nor heavy nor wroth, nor mickle stirred against no creature for aught that they may do or speak against thee ; but settest thy heart fully for to suffer all that may fall, ease and un-ease, praising or lacking, and that thou wilt charge nothing with thee, that thou might keep thy thought and thy desire whole to the love of God, then are they mickle abashed. But then will they assay thee with flattering and vain pleasing, and that is when they bring to the sight of thy soul all thy good deeds and thy virtues, and bear upon thee that all men praise thee and speak of thine holiness and how all men love thee and worship thee for thine holy living. This do thine enemies that thou shouldest think their saying sooth, and have delight in this vain joy and rest thee therein. But if thou do well, thou shalt hold all such vain jangling falsehood, and flattering of thine enemy,

that proffereth thee to drink venom tempered with honey. And therefore refuse it and say thou wilt not thereof, but thou wouldest be at Jerusalem.

Such lettings thou shalt feel or else other like, what of thy flesh, what of the world, what of the fiend, more than I may rehearse now. For a man as long as he suffereth his thought wilfully run all about the world in beholding of sundry things, he perceiveth few lettings. But as soon as he draweth all his thought and his yearning to one thing only, for to have that, for to see that, for to know that, and for to love that, and that is only Jhesu ; then shall he well feel many painful lettings. For ilk a thing that he feeleth and is not that that he coveteth, is letting to him. Therefore I have told thee of some specially, as for example ; and overmore I say generally, that what stirring that thou feelest of thy flesh or of the fiend, pleasant or painful, bitter or sweet, liking or dreadful, gladsome or sorrowful, that would draw down thy thought and thy desire from the love of Jhesu to worldly vanity and let utterly thy ghostly covetise that thou hast to the love of Him, and that thy heart should be occupied with that stirring restingly, set it at nought, receive it not wilfully, tarry not therewith too long.

But if it be of worldly thing that behoveth needs to be done to thyself or to thine even-christian, speed thee soon of it, and bring it to an end that it hang not on thine heart. If it be

another thing that needeth not, or else it toucheth not thee, charge it not, jangle not therewith, nor anger thee not, dread it not, like it not, but smite it out of thine heart readily. And say thus : " I am nought ; I have nought ; nought I seek nor covet but the love of Jhesu." Knit thy thought to this desire, and strengthen it and maintain it with prayer and with other ghostly work that thou forget it not, and it shall lead thee in the right way and save thee from all perils, that though thou feel them thou shalt not perish ; and I expect that it shall bring thee to perfect love of our Lord Jhesu.

Nevertheless on that other side I say also, what work or what stirring it be that may help thy desire, strength it and nourish it, and make thy thought furthest from lust and mind of the world, more whole and more burning to the love of God, whether it be praying or thinking, stillness or speaking, reading or hearing, onliness or communing, going or sitting ; keep it for the time and work therein as long as savour lasteth, if it be so that thou take therewith meat and drink and sleep as a pilgrim doth, and keep discretion in thy working after counsel and ordinance of thy sovereign. For have he never so great haste in his going, yet he will in time eat and drink and sleep. Do thou so also. For though it let thee one time, it shall further thee another time.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

How a soul that is formed to the likeness of Jhesu desireth nothing but Him ; and how He maketh this desire in the soul, and He it is that desireth thy soul.

IF thou wilt wit then what this desire is, soothly it is Jhesu. For He maketh this desire in thee and He giveth it thee, and He it is that desireth in thee and He it is that is desired. He is all, and He doth all, if thou might see Him. Thou dost nought, but sufferest Him work in thy soul and assents to Him with great gladness of heart that He vouchsafeth for to do so in thee. Thou art nought else but a reasonable instrument wherein that He worketh. And therefore when thou feelest thy thought by touching of His grace taken up with desire to Jhesu with a mighty devout will for to please Him and love Him, think then that thou hast Jhesu ; for He it is that thou desirest. Behold Him well, for He goeth before thee, not in bodily likeness, but unseeably by privy presence of His might. Therefore see Him ghostly if thou mayest, or else trow Him and follow Him whither so He goeth ; for He shall lead thee in the right way to Jerusalem that is

the sight of peace in contemplation. Thus prayed the prophet to the Father of Heaven, saying thus : *Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam ; ipsa me deduxerunt, et adduxerunt in montem sanctum tuum, et in tabernacula tua.* That is : Father of heaven, send out Thy light and Thy soothfastness, that is Thy Son Jhesu ; and He shall lead me by desire in me into Thine holy hill and into Thy tabernacles, that is to the feeling of perfect love and height in contemplation.¹

Of this desire speaketh the prophet thus : *Memoriale tuum Domine in desiderio animae. Anima mea desideravit te in nocte, sed et spiritus meus in precordiis meis.* That is : Lord Jhesu, the mind of Thee is printed in desire of my soul, for my soul hath desired Thee in the night and my spirit hath coveted Thee in all my thinkings.² And why the prophet saith he hath desired God all in the night, and what he meaneth thereby, I shall tell thee. Thou wost well that the night is a timeful space betwixt two days ; for when one day is ended, another cometh not at once, but first cometh night and departeth the days, sometime long and sometime short, and then after that cometh another day. The prophet meant not only of this manner of night, but he meant of a ghostly night. Thou shalt understand that there be two days or two lights ; the first is a false light, the second is a true light. The false

¹ Psa. xliii. 3.

² Is. xxvi. 8, 9.

light is the love of this world, that a man hath in himself of corruption of his flesh ; the true light is the perfect love of Jhesu felt through grace in a man's soul. The love of the world is a false light, for it passeth away and it lasteth not, and so it performeth not that that it behoteth. This light behight the fiend to Adam, when he stirred him to sin, and said thus : *Aperientur oculi vestri ; et eritis sicut dii.* That is : Your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods.¹ And he said sooth there ; for when Adam had sinned, anon his inner eye was closed and ghostly light withdrawn, and his outer eyes were opened, and he felt and saw a new light of fleshly liking and worldly love that he saw not before. And so saw he a new day, but this was an ill day ; for this was it that Job cursed when he said thus : *Pereat dies in qua natus sum.* That is : Perish mote the day in the which I was born.² He cursed not the day running in the year that God made, but he cursed this day that man made, that is, the concupiscence and the love of this world in the which he was born, though he felt it not. Then this day and this light he asked of God that it should perish, and no longer last.

But the aye lasting love of Jhesu is a true day and a blessed light. For God is both love and light, and He is aye lasting, and therefore he that loveth Him is in light aye lasting, as Saint John

¹ Gen. iii. 5.

² Job iii. 3.

saith : *Qui diligit Deum manet in lumine.* He that loveth God dwelleth all in light.¹ Then what man perceiveth and seeth the love of this world false and failing, and for this he will forsake it and seek the love of God ; he may not at once feel the love of Him, but he must abide a while in the night, for he may not suddenly come from that one light to that other, that is, from the love of the world to perfect love of God. < This night is nought else but a forbearing and a withdrawing of the thought of the soul from earthly things, by great desire and yearning for to love and see and feel Jhesu and ghostly things. > This is the night : for right as the night is murk and an hiding of all bodily creatures and a resting of all bodily deeds, right so a man that setteth him fully for to think on Jhesu, and for to desire only the love of Him, is busy for to hide his thought from vain beholding and his affection from fleshly liking of all bodily creatures, so that his thought be made free, not fixed, nor his affection bound nor pained nor troubled in nothing lower or worse than himself is. And if he may do so, then is it night with him, for then is he in murkness.

But this is a good night and a lightly murkness, for it is a stopping out of the false love of this world, and it is a nighing to the true day. And soothly the murkier that this night is, the nearer

¹ 1 John ii. 10.

is the true day of the love of Jhesu ; for the more that the soul may through longing to God be hid from noise and din of fleshly affections and unclean thoughts, the nearer is it for to feel the light of the love of Him, for it is even at it. Thus seemeth it the prophet meant when he said thus : *Cum in tenebris sedero, Dominus lux mea est.* That is, when I sit in the murkness our Lord is my light ¹ ; that is, when my soul is hid from all stirrings of sin as it were in sleep, then is our Lord my light, for then nigheth He of His grace for to show me of His light. Nevertheless this night is sometimes painful and sometimes it is easy and comfortable. It is painful first when a man is mickle foul and is not through grace used to be often in this murkness, but would fain have it, and therefore he setteth his thought and his desire to Godward as mickle as he may, that he would not feel nor think but only of Him. And because that he may not lightly have it, therefore it is painful, for the custom and the homeliness that he hath had with sins before of the world, and of fleshly affections and earthly things, and his fleshly deeds, press so upon him and aye smite in big mastery and draw down all the soul to them, that he may not well be hid from them as soon as he would. And therefore is this murkness painful to him, and namely when grace toucheth not abundantly.

¹ Micah vii. 8.

Nevertheless if it be so with thee, be not too heavy nor strive not too mickle, as though thou wouldest through mastery put them out of thy thought ; for thou mayest not do so. But abide grace, suffer easily, and break not thyself too mickle ; and slyly if thou mayest draw thy desire and thy ghostly beholding to Jhesu, as if thou wouldest not charge them.

For wit thou well, when thou wouldest desire Jhesu and only think on Him, and thou mayest not freely for pressing in of such worldly thoughts, soothly thou art outward of the false day, and thou art entering into this murkness ; but thy murkness is not restful, because of disuse and uncunning and uncleanness of thyself. And therefore use it often, and it shall by process through feeling of grace be more easy and more restful to thee. And that is when thy soul through grace is made so free and so mighty and so gathered into itself, that it lust not to think on right nought, and that it may without letting of any bodily thing think of right nought : then is it in a good murkness.

This nought I mean thus. That a soul may through grace be gathered into itself and stand still in itself freely and wholly, and not be driven against the will nor drawn down by mastery for to think or like or love with cleaving of affection to any sin, or vain or earthly thing. Then thinketh the soul right nought ; for then thinketh

it of none earthly thing cleavingly. This is a rich nought. And this nought and this night is a great ease for the soul that desireth the love of Jhesu. It is in ease as for thought of any earthly thing, but not as for Jhesu ; for though the soul think not of any earthly thing, nevertheless it is full busy for to think on Him.

What thing then maketh this murkness ? Soothly nought else but a gracious desire for to have the love of Jhesu. For that desire and that longing that it hath that time to the love of God, for to see Him and have Him, driveth out of the heart all worldly vanities and fleshly affections, and gathereth the soul into itself and occupieth it only for to think how it might come to the love of Him, and so bringeth it into this rich nought. And soothly it is not all murk nor nought when it thinketh thus ; for though it be murk from false light, it is not all murk from the true love.¹ For Jhesu, that is both love and light, is in this murkness, whether it be painful or restful. He is in the soul as travailing in desire and longing to light ; but He is not yet as resting in love, and showing His light. And therefore it is called night and murkness, in as mickle as the soul is hid from the false light of the world and hath not yet fully feeling of true light, but is in abiding of that blessed love of God which it desireth.

Then if thou wilt wit when thou art in this

¹ MS. 9, Ye trewe light.

secure murkness and when not, thou mayest assay thus, and seek no further but thus. When thou feelest thine intent and thy will fully set for to desire God and think only on Him, thou mayest as it were first ask thyself in thine own thought, whether thou covet for to have anything of this life for love of itself, or for to have the use of any of thy bodily wits in any creature. And then if thine eye begin and answer thus, I would see right nought ; and after that thine ear, I would hear right nought ; and thy mouth, I would savour right nought, I would speak right nought of earthly things ; and thy nose, I would smell right nought ; and thy body, I would feel right nought ; and after, if thine heart say, I would think right nought of earthly things, nor of bodily deed, nor I would have affection fastened fleshly to no creature, but only in God and to Godward, if that I could. And when they answer all thus to thee, and that is done full readily if grace touch thee, then art thou entered somewhat into this murkness. For though thou feel and perceive glintings and profferings of vain thought and pressing in of fleshly affections, nevertheless thou art in this profitable murkness, so be that thy thought be nought fixed in them. For such vain imaginations that fall in the heart unadvisedly trouble this murkness and pain the soul somewhat, because that it would be hid from them and may not. But they do not away

the profit of this murkness, for the soul shall by that way come to restful murkness. And then is this murkness restful, when the soul is hid for a time from the painful feeling of all such vain thoughts, and only is rested in desire and longing to Jhesu with a ghostly beholding of Him, as it shall be said afterward. But that lasteth but a while whole ; nevertheless though it be but a short time, it is full profitable.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

How the desire of Jhesu felt in this lightsome darkness slayeth all stirrings of sin, and ableth the soul to see ghostly lightnings from the Heavenly Jerusalem, that is Jhesu.

THEN since this murkness and this night is so good and so restful, though it be but short, that standeth only in desire and longing to the love of Jhesu with a blind thinking on Him ; how good then and how blessed is it for to feel His love and for to be illumined with His blessed unseeable light for to see soothfastness, the which light a soul receiveth when the night passeth and the day springeth. This I expect was the night that the prophet meant when he said : *Anima mea desideravit te in nocte* ; My soul hath desired thee in the night,¹ as I have before said. It is mickle better to be hid in this murk night from beholding of the world, though it were painful, than for to be out in false liking of this world that seemeth so shining and so comfortable to them that are blind in knowing of ghostly light. For when thou art in this murkness thou art mickle nearer Jerusalem than when thou art in midst of that false light.

¹ Isaiah xxvi. 9.

Therefore apply thine heart fully to the stirring of grace, and use for to dwell in this murkness, and be often assaying to be homely therein, and it shall soon be made restful to thee and the true light of ghostly knowing shall spring to thee ; not all at once, but privily by little and by little, as the prophet saith : *Habitantibus in regione umbrae mortis, lux orta est eis.* That is : To the dwelling in the country of shadow of death, light was sprung.¹ That is, light of grace sprang and shall spring to them that can dwell in the shadow of death, that is, in this murkness that is like to death. For as death slayeth a living body and all fleshly feelings of it, right so desire to love Jhesu felt in this murkness slayeth all sins, all fleshly affections and all unclean thoughts for the time, and then nighest thou fast to Jerusalem. Thou art not yet at it, but by small sudden lightings that glide out through small crannies from that city shalt thou be able to see it from far, or that thou come thereto. For wit thou well, though that thy soul be in this restful murkness without troubling of worldly vanities, it is not yet there it should be, it is not yet clothed all in light, nor turned all into fire of love ; but it feel-eth well that there is somewhat above itself that it knoweth not nor hath not yet, but it would have it, and burningly yearneth it. And that is nought else but the sight of Jerusalem without-forth,

¹ Isaiah ix. 2.

the which is like to a city that the prophet Ezechiel saw in his visions.

He saith that he saw a city set upon an hill sloping to the south, that to his sight when it was measured was no more of length and of breadth than a rood, that was six cubits and a palm of length ; but as soon as he was brought into the city and looked about him, then thought him that it was wonder mickle, for he saw many halls and chambers both open and privy, he saw gates and porches, outward and inward, and mickle more building than I say now, on length and on breadth many hundred cubits. Then was this wonder to him, how this city within was so long and so large, that was so little to his sight when he was without. This city betokeneth the perfect love of God, set in the hill of contemplation ; the which unto the sight of a soul that is without the feeling of it and travaileth in desire toward, seemeth somewhat, but it seemeth but a little thing, no more than a rood, that is six cubits and a palm in length. By six cubits is understood the perfection of man's work, by the palm a little touching of contemplation. He seeth well that there is such a thing, that passeth the desert of all working of man a little, as the palm passeth over the six cubits, but he seeth not within what that is. Nevertheless if he may come within the city of contemplation, then seeth he mickle more than he saw first.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

How a man shall know false illuminations feigned by the fiend from the true light of knowing that cometh out of Jhesu ; and by what tokens.

BUT now beware of the midday fiend, that feigneth light as it come out of Jerusalem and is not. For the fiend seeth that our Lord Jhesu showeth light to His lovers of soothfastness, therefore in deceiving of them that are unwise he showeth a light that is not true under colour of a true light, and deceiveth them. Nevertheless how a soul may know the light of soothfastness, when it shineth from God, and when it is feigned through the enemy, shall I say as me thinketh by an example of the firmament.

Sometime the firmament showeth a light from the sun and seemeth the sun and is not, and sometime sheweth the true sun truly. A knowing of that one from that other is this. The feigned sun showeth him not but atwixt two black rainy clouds : then, because that the sun is near, there shineth out from the clouds a light as it were a sun, and is none. But the true sun showeth him when the firmament is clear or

mickle cleared from the black clouds. Now to our purpose. Some men as it seemeth forsake the love of the world and would come to the love of God and to the light of understanding of Him, but they will not come through this murkness that I have spoken of before. They will not know themselves truly nor meekly, what they have been before, nor what they are yet through sin, nor how nought they are in their own kind anent God. They are not busy for to enter into themselves, all other things outward left, and slay all wicked stirrings of sin that rise in their hearts, of pride, envy, ire and other sins, through lasting desire to Jhesu, in praying and in thinking, in silence and in weeping, and in other bodily and ghostly exercise as devout men and holy men have done. But anon as they have forsaken the world as it were outward in likeness, or else soon after, they ween that they are holy and able for to have the ghostly understanding of the gospel and of holy writ. And namely if they may fulfil letterly the commandments of God and keep them from bodily sins, then they ween that they love God perfectly ; and therefore they will anon preach and teach all other men, as if they had received grace of understanding and perfection of charity through special gift of the Holy Ghost. And also they are mickle more stirred thereto, for as mickle as they feel sometimes mickle knowing, as it were suddenly given to them with-

out great study beforehand, and also mickle fervour of love, as it seemeth, for to preach truth and righteousness to their even-christian. Therefore they hold it as a grace of God, that visiteth them with His blessed light before other souls. Nevertheless if they will look well about them, they shall well see that this light of knowing and that heat that they feel cometh not of the true sun, that is our Lord Jhesu ; but it cometh from the midday fiend that feigneth light, and likeneth him to the sun. And therefore shall he be known by example before said.

Light of knowing that is feigned by the fiend to a murk soul is aye showed atwixt two black rainy clouds. The over cloud is presumption and highing of himself ; the nether cloud is down putting and lowing of his even-christian. Then what light of knowing or feeling of fervour that it be that shineth to a soul, with presumption and highing of itself and disdain of his even-christian the same time felt, is not light of grace given of the Holy Ghost though the knowing in itself were soothfast ; but it is either of the fiend if it come suddenly or else of man's own wit if it come by study. And so may it well be known that this feigned light of knowing is not the light of the true sun.

For they that have this knowing on this manner are full of ghostly pride and see it not. They are so blinded with this feigned light that they hold the highness of their own heart and

unbuxomness to the laws of Holy Kirk, as it were perfect meekness to the gospel and to the laws of God. They ween that the following of their own will were freedom of spirit, and therefore they begin to rain as black clouds water of errors and heresies, for the words that they show by preaching resound all to backbiting and to striving, and to discord-making reproving of states and of persons; and yet they say that all this is charity and zeal of righteousness. But it is not sooth, for Saint James the Apostle saith thus : *Ubi enim zelus et contentio, ibi inconstantia et omne opus pravum. Non est sapientia haec desursum descendens a Patri luminum, sed terrena, animalis et diabolica.* That is : Whereso envy is and contending, there is unstableness and all evil work. And therefore that cunning that bringeth forth such sins cometh not from the Father of Light, that is God, but it is earthly, beastly and fiendly.¹ And so by these tokens, that are pride, presumption, unbuxomness, indignation, backbiting, and other such sins, for these follow after, may the feigned light be known from the true. For the true sun showeth Him not by special visitation for to give light of understanding or perfect charity to a soul, but if the firmament be first made bright and clear from clouds ; that is, but if the conscience be made clean through fire of burning desire to Jhesu in this murkness, the which

¹ James iii. 16, 15.

wasteth and burneth all wicked stirrings of pride, vainglory, ire, envy, and all other sins in the soul, as the prophet saith : *Ignis ante ipsum praecedet, et inflammabit in circuitu inimicos ejus.* Fire shall go before him ; that is, desire of love shall go before Jhesu in a man's soul and it shall burn all his enemies, that is, it shall waste all sins.¹

For but if a soul be first smitten down from height of itself by dread, and be well examined and burnt in this fire of desire, and as it were purified from all ghostly filth by long time in devout prayers and other ghostly exercises, it is not able to suffer the shinings of ghostly light nor for to receive the precious liquor of perfect love of Jhesu ; but when it is thus purified and made subtle through this fire, then may it receive the gracious light of ghostly knowing and the perfection of love, that is true sun. Thus saith holy writ : *Vobis qui timetis Dominum orietur sol justitiae.* The true sun of righteousness, that is, our Lord Jhesu, shall spring to you that dread Him² ; that is, to meek souls that meek themselves under their even-christian by knowing of their own wretchedness, and cast themselves down under God by noughting of themselves in their own substance through reverent dread and ghostly beholding of Him lastingly, for that is perfect meekness.

Unto these souls the true sun shall spring, and

¹ Psa. xcvi. 3.

² Mal. iv. 2.

illumine their reason in knowing of soothfastness and kindling their affection in burning of love : and then shall they both burn and shine. They shall through virtue of this heavenly sun burn in perfect love, and shine in knowing of God and ghostly things, for then be they reformed in feeling. Therefore he that will not be deceived, I hope it is good to him to draw down himself and hide him in this murkness first from intermeddling of other men, as I have said, and forget all the world if he may ; and follow Jhesu with lasting desire offered in prayers and thinking on Him. Then I trow that the light that cometh after this murkness is sure and soothfast, and that it shineth out of the city of Jerusalem from the true sun to a soul that travaileth in murkness and crieth after light, for to show it the way and comfort it in travail. For I expect after true murkness before cometh never feigned light. That is, if a man truly and fully set him for to forsake the love of the world, and may through grace come to feeling and knowing of himself, and hold him meekly in that feeling, he shall not be deceived with none errors nor heresies nor fantasies ; for all these come in by the gate of pride. Then if pride be stopped out, there shall none such rest in a soul, and though they come and proffer them, they shall not enter. For grace that the soul feeleth in this meek murkness shall teach the soul soothfastness, and show to it that all such profferings are of the enemy.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

How great profit it is to a soul to be brought through grace into lightsome darkness, and how a man shall dispose him if he would come thereto.

THERE are many devout souls that through grace come into this murkness and feel the knowing of themselves, and yet wit they not fully what it is ; and that uncunning in part hindereth them. They feel well often their thought and their affections drawn out and departed from the mind of earthly things, and brought into great rest of a delectable softness without painful troubling of vain thoughts or of their bodily wits ; and they feel that time so great freedom of spirit that they may think on Jhesu peaceably and offer their prayers and their psalms mightily savourly and sweetly to Him as long as frailty of the bodily kind may suffer it. They wit well that this feeling is good, but they wit not what it is. Therefore unto all such souls I say as me thinketh, that this manner of feeling though it be but short and but seldom, it is soothfastly this murkness that I speak of ; for it is a feeling of themselves first, and a

rising above themselves through burning desire to the sight of Jhesu, or else if I shall say more soothly this gracious feeling is a ghostly sight of Jhesu. And if they may keep them in that rest, or bring it through grace into custom so that they might lightly and freely have it when them list, and hold them in it, they should never be overcome by temptation of the fiend nor of the flesh, nor by errors nor heresies ; for they are set in the gate of contemplation, able and ready for to receive the perfect love of Jhesu. Therefore he that hath it, it is good that he know it meekly, keep it tenderly, and pursue it fervently ; that no creature let him utterly from it that he follow it not when he may, and that he forget and set at nought all thing that should put him from this, if he be free of himself and may do what he will without scandal or distress of his even-christian. For me thinketh that he may not come to this rest lightly, but if he have great plenty of grace and set himself for to follow after the stirring of grace ; and that oweth he for to do, for grace would aye be free, namely from sin and worldly business, and from all other things that let the working of it, though they be no sin.

Nevertheless another soul that hath not yet received this fulness of grace, if he desire for to come to this ghostly knowing of Jhesu, as mickle as in him is he must able himself to it, and put away all lettings that stop grace as mickle as he

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may. He must learn for to die to the world, and forsake the love of it truly. First pride, bodily and ghostly, that he desire no worship of the world nor praising, name nor fame, state nor degree, mastery nor lordship, worldly cunning nor worldly craft, benefices nor riches, precious clothing nor worldly array, nor nothing where through he should be worshipped above other men. He shall covet none of all these, but if they be put upon him take them with dread, so that he be poor both outward and inward, or else fully inward ; and that he covet for to be forgotten of the world, that men regard him no more ; be he never so rich nor so cunning, than the poorest man that liveth. Also that he suffer not his heart rest in beholding of his own good deeds or in his virtues, weening that he doth better than another, for he forsaketh the world and others do not so, and therefore appeareth well by himself. Also he must leave all rising of heart and evil wills of ire and envy against his even-christian, and that he distress no man nor anger him unreasonably in word nor in deed, nor give any man matter where through he might reasonably be angered or stirred ; so that he might be free from every man, that no man have for to do with him nor he with any man. And also that he forsake covetise, that he covet right nought of earthly good, but only ask his bodily sustenance as him needeth, and hold him

paid when God stirreth other men for to give him. And that he put no manner of trust in having of any worldly good, nor in help or favour of any worldly friend, but principally and fully in God, for if he do otherwise he bindeth himself to the worldly, and he may not therefore be free for to think on God. And also gluttony and lechery, and all other fleshly uncleanness utterly he must leave, that the affection be bound to no woman by fleshly love or fleshly homeliness. For it is no doubt that such blind love that is sometime atwixt a man and a woman, and seemeth good and honest for as mickle as they would not sin in deed, in the sight of God is full unclean and well great sin. For it is a great sin that a man shall suffer his affection, that should be fastened to Jhesu, and to all virtues and to all ghostly cleanness, for to be bound with any fleshly love of any creature wilfully; namely if it be so mickle that it beareth down the thought and maketh it unrestful, that he may no savour have in God. Thus I hold it wilfully that a man doth it and saith it is no sin, or else is so blinded with it that he will not see it. And also that a man covet not no delices of meats and drinks only for lust of his flesh, but hold him paid with such meat as he may easily have without great business; namely if he be whole, what meat it be that will do away hunger and keep the body in common strength unto the

service of God ; and that he grouch not nor strive not, nor anger him not for his meat, though he be sometime not served as the flesh would.

All these sins and all other must be forsaken utterly in his will and in deed when he may, and other things that let him, so that he may dispose him for to think freely on Jhesu. For as long as these lettings and such other hang upon him he may not die to the world, nor come into this murkness of knowing of himself, and therefore that he might come thereto he must do all this, as Saint Paul did, saying thus : *Michi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo*. The world is slain and crucified to me, and I to the world.¹ That is, he that forsaketh the love of the world in worships and riches, and in all other worldly things before said for love of God, and loveth it not nor pursueth it not, but is well paid that he hath right nought of it, nor would have though he might ; soothly to him the world is dead, for he hath no savour nor delight therein. Also if the world setteth him at nought and hath no regard to him, doth him no favour, no worship, setteth no prize by him, but forgetteth him as a dead man, then is he dead to the world. And in this plight was Saint Paul set perfectly, and so must any other man in part that would follow and come to the perfect love of God ; for he may

¹ Gal. vi. 14.

not live to God fully, but if he die first to the world.

This dying to the world is this murkness, and it is the gate to contemplation and to reforming in feeling, and none other than this. There may be many sundry ways and divers works leading sundry souls to contemplation ; for after sundry disposings of men, and after sundry states, as are religious and seculars, that they are in, are divers exercises in working. Nevertheless there is no gate but one ; for what exercise it be that a soul have, but if he may come by that exercise to this knowing and to a meek feeling of himself, and that is that he be mortified and dead to the world as in his love, and that he may feel himself set sometime in this restful murkness by the which he may be hid from vanity of the world and see himself what he is, soothly he is not yet come to reforming in feeling, nor hath not fully contemplation. He is full far therefrom. And if he will come by any other gate, he is but a thief and a breaker of the wall, and therefore as unworthy he shall be cast out. But he that can bring himself first to nought through grace of meekness and die on this manner, he is in the gate, for he is dead to the world and he liveth to God. Of the which Saint Paul speaketh thus : *Mortui enim estis, et vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo.* Ye are dead, that is, ye that for the love of God forsake all the love of

the world are dead to the world, but your life is hid from worldly men as Christ liveth and is hid in His Godhead from the love and the sight of fleshly lovers.¹

This gate our Lord Himself showed in the gospel when He said thus: *Omnis qui reliquerit patrem aut matrem, fratrem aut sororem propter me, centuplum accipiet, et vitam aeternam possidebit.* Ilk man that forsaketh for My love father or mother, sister or brother or any earthly good, he shall have an hundredfold in this life and afterward the bliss of heaven.² This hundredfold that a soul shall have if he forsake the world is nought else but the profit of this lighty murkness, the which I call the gate of contemplation. For he that is in this murkness and is hid through grace from worldly vanity, he coveteth not of worldly good, he seeketh it not, he is not vexed therewith, he looketh not after it, he loveth it not, and therefore hath he an hundredfold more than the King or than he hath that most coveteth of earthly good. For he that nought coveteth but Jhesu hath an hundredfold, for he hath more rest, more peace in heart, more very love and delight in soul in one day, than he that most coveteth of the world and hath all the wealth of it under his will hath in all his lifetime.

This is then a good murkness and a rich nought, that bringeth a soul to so mickle ghostly ease and

¹ Col. iii. 3.

² Matt. xix. 29.

so still softness. I trow David meant of this night or of this nought when he said thus : *Ad nichilum redactus sum, et nescivi*. That is, I was brought to nought, and I wist not.¹ That is: the grace of our Lord Jhesu sent into mine heart hath slain in me and brought to nought all the love of the world, and I wist not how. For through no working of myself nor by mine own will I have it not, but of the grace of our Lord Jhesu. And therefore, me thinketh, he that will have the light of grace and fulsomely feel the love of Jhesu in his soul, he must forsake all the false light of worldly love, and abide in this murkness. And nevertheless if he be adread first for to dwell therein, turn not again to the love of the world, but suffer awhile and put all his hope and his trust in Jhesu, and he shall not long be without some ghostly light. Thus biddeth the prophet : *Qui ambulavit in tenebris, et non est lumen ei, speret in Domino, et innitatur super Deum suum* : Whoso goeth in murkness and hath no light, that is, whoso will hide him from the love of the world and may not readily feel light of ghostly love, despair not, turn not again to the world but hope in our Lord, and lean upon Him, that is, trust in God and cleave to Him by desire and abide awhile, and he shall have light.² For it falleth thereby as it doth if a man had been a great while in the sun, and after that come

¹ Psa. lxxiii. 22.² Isaiah l. 10.

suddenly into a murk house where no sun shineth. He should first be as he were blind and see right nought ; but if he will abide awhile he shall be able to see soon about him, first great things and then small, and then all that ever is in the house. Right so it is ghostly : he that forsaketh the love of the world and cometh to himself into his own conscience, it is first murk somewhat and blind to his sight. But if he stand still, and hold forth with busy praying and often thinking the same will to the love of Jhesu, he shall be able to see afterward great things and small, that he first knew not. Thus seemeth it that the prophet behight, saying thus : *Orietur in tenebris lux tua, et tenebrae tuae erunt sicut meridies. Et requiem dabit tibi Dominus Deus tuus, et implebit animam tuam splendoribus* :¹ Light shall spring to thee in murkness. That is, thou that forsakest soothfastly the light of all worldly love and hidest thy thought in this murkness, light of blessed love and ghostly knowing of God shall spring to thee. *And thy murkness shall be as midday.* That is, thy murkness of travailing desire and thy blind trust in God that thou hast first shall turn into clear knowing and into sureness of love. *And thy Lord God shall give rest to thee.* That is, thy fleshly desires and thy painful dreads and doubts, and wicked spirits that have continually beforehand

¹ Isaiah lviii. 10, 11.

travailed thee, all these shall weaken, and lessen mickle of their might ; and thou shalt be made so strong that they shall not hurt thee, for thou shalt be hid in rest from them. *And then shall our Lord Jhesu fulfil thy soul with shinings.* That is, when thou art brought into this ghostly rest, then shalt thou more easily tend to God, and nought else do but love Him. And then shall He with beams of ghostly light fulfil all the mights of thy soul. Have thou no wonder, though I call the forsaking of worldly love murkness ; for the prophet calleth it so, saying thus to a soul : *Intra in tenebras tuas, filia Chaldaeorum.* Go into thy murkness, thou daughter of Chaldee.¹ That is, thou soul that art a daughter of Chaldee for love of the world, forsake it and go into thy murkness.

¹ Isaiah xlvii. 5.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

That in reforming of a soul the working of our Lord Jhesu is departed in four times ; that is calling, righting, magnifying and glorifying.

LO I have said to thee a little if thou covet for to be reformed in feeling, how thou shalt dispose thee toward in thy forth going. Nevertheless I say not that thou mayest do thus of thyself, for I wot well that our Lord Jhesu bringeth all this to end, whereso He will. For He only through His grace stirreth a soul, and bringeth it into this murkness first, and then into light ; as the prophet saith : *Sicut tenebrae ejus, ita et lumen ejus*. That is : Right as the light of knowing and the feeling of ghostly love is of God, right so the murkness, that is the forsaking of worldly love, is of Him.¹ For He doth all ; He formeth and reformeth. He formeth only by Himself, but He reformeth us with us ; for grace given, and applying of our will to grace, worketh all this. And on what manner wise he doth that, Saint Paul rehearseth thus : *Quos Deus praescivit fieri conformes imaginis Filii ejus, hos vocavit ; et*

¹ Psa. cxxxix. 12.

quos vocavit, hos justificavit; et quos justificavit, hos magnificavit; et quos magnificavit, hos et glorificavit. These that God knew before, that should be made shapely to the image of His Son, these He called, these He righted, these He magnified, and these He glorified.¹

Though these words may be said of all chosen souls in the lowest degree of charity, that are reformed only in faith; nevertheless they may be understood more specially of these souls that are reformed in feeling, unto the which our Lord God sheweth mickle plenty of grace, and doth mickle more business about them. For they are His own sons specially, that bear the full shape and the likeness of His Son Jhesu. In the which words Saint Paul departeth the working of our Lord in four times. First is the time of calling of a soul from worldly vanity, and that time is often easy and comfortable. For in beginning of turning such a man that is disposed to mickle grace is so quickly and so feelingly inspired and feeleth often so great sweetness of devotion, and hath so many tears in compunction, that he thinketh him some time as he were half in heaven. But this softness passeth away after for a time; and then cometh the second time, that is time of righting. That is travailous; for when he beginneth for to go forth mightily in the way of righteousness and set his will fully against all sin

¹ Rom. viii. 29, 30.

without and within, and stretcheth out his desire to virtues and to the love of Jhesu, then feeleth he mickle letting both within himself, of frowardness and hardness of his own will, and from without through temptation of his enemy, that he is often in full great torment. And that is no wonder, for he hath so long been crooked to the false love of the world, that he may not be made right and even without great baking and bowing, right as a crooked staff may not be made even, but if it be cast and baked in the fire. Therefore our Lord Jhesu, seeing what thing is behovable to a froward soul, suffereth it to be travailed and teased by sundry temptations, and for to be well examined through ghostly tribulations till that all the rust of uncleanness might be burnt out of it. And that shall be both within, of dread and doubts and perplexities, that it shall nearly fall in despair ; and it shall seem as it were forsaken of God and left all in the hands of the fiend, out-taken a little privy trust that it shall have in the goodness of God and in His mercy. For that privy trust our Lord Jhesu leaveth in such a soul, go He never so far from it ; by the which the soul is borne up from despair, and saved from ghostly mischiefs. And also without itself it shall be mortified, and paid in the sensuality. Either by divers sickness or by feelable tormenting of the fiend, or else through a privy might of God, the silly soul by feeling and bearing of the

wretched body shall be so pained, and it shall not wit where nor how that it should not be able to suffer for to be in the body were it not that our Lord Jhesu keepeth it therein. And yet nevertheless had the soul liefer for to be in all this pain than for to be blinded with the false love of the world. For that were hell to such a soul ; but the suffering of this manner pain is nought but purgatory, and therefore he suffereth it gladly, and he would not put it away though he might, for it is so profitable. All this doth our Lord in great profit of the soul, for to drive it out from the rest in fleshly living, and depart it from the love of the sensuality, that it might receive ghostly light.

For after this, when the soul is thus mortified and brought from worldly love into this murkness, that it hath no more savour nor delight of worldly liking than of a straw, but he thinketh it bitter as wormwood ; then cometh the third time of magnifying. And that is when the soul is reformed in feeling in party, and receiveth the gift of perfection and the grace of contemplation ; and that is a time of great rest. And after this cometh the fourth time, of glorifying ; that is when the soul shall be fully reformed in the bliss of heaven. For these souls that are thus called from sin and thus righted or else on other manner like, by divers assaying both through fire and water, and afterward are thus magnified,

they shall be glorified. For our Lord shall then give them fully that they here coveted, and more than they could covet. For He shall raise them up above all other chosen souls to the evenhead of cherubim and seraphim, since they passed all other in knowing and love of God here in this life.

Therefore he that will come to this magnifying dread not this righting, for that is the way. For our Lord said by His prophet a word of great comfort to all such souls that are examined with fire of tribulation, thus : *Puer meus non timere, si transieris per ignem, flamma non nocebit te.* That is : My child if thou pass through fire, dread not, for the flame shall not hurt thee.¹ It shall cleanse thee from all fleshly filth and make thee able for to receive ghostly fire of the love of God. And that needeth for to be done first. For as I have before said, it may not else be reformed in feeling.

¹ Isaiah xliii. 2.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

How it falleth sometime that souls beginning and profiting in grace seem to have more love as by outward tokens than some have that be perfect ; and yet it is not so in sooth within.

BUT now sayest thou : How may this be sooth ? For there are many souls now turned to God that have many ghostly feelings. Some have greater compunctions for their sins, and some have greater devotions and fervours in their prayers, and often have sundry touchings of ghostly light in understanding ; and some have other manner feelings of comfortable heat and great sweetness, and nevertheless these souls come never fully in this restful murkness that I speak of, with fervent desire and lasting thought in God. Then askest thou, whether these souls be reformed in feeling or not ? It seemeth yes, in as mickle as they have such great ghostly feelings, that other men that stand only in faith feel not of.

Unto this I may say, as me thinketh, that these ghostly feelings, whether they stand in compunction or in devotion, or in ghostly imagination, are not the feelings which a soul shall have and feel

in the grace of contemplation. I say not but that they are soothfast and graciously given of God. But these souls that feel such are not yet reformed in feeling, nor they have not yet the gift of perfection nor ghostly the burning love in Jhesu, as they may come to. And nevertheless often it seemeth otherwise that such souls feel more of the love of God than other that have the gift of perfection, in as mickle as the feeling sheweth more outward by great fervour of bodily tokens, in weeping, praying, kneeling, and speaking, and other bodily stirring ; so far forth that it seemeth to another man that they were aye ravished in love. And though me thinketh that it is not so, well I wot that these manner feelings and fervours of devotion and compunction that these men feel are gracious gifts of God sent into chosen souls, for to draw them out of worldly love and fleshly lust that have been long time rooted in their heart, from the which love they should not be drawn out but by such feelable stirring of great fervours.

Nevertheless, that the fervour is so mickle in outward shewing is not only for mickleness of love that they have ; but it is for littleness and weakness of their souls, that may not bear a little touching of God. For it is yet as it were fleshly, fastened to the flesh, and never was yet departed from it through ghostly mortifying ; and therefore the least touching of love and the

least sparkle of ghostly light sent from heaven into such a soul is so mickle and so comfortable, so sweet and so delectable, over all the liking that ever it felt before in fleshly love or earthly thing, that it is overtaken with it ; and also it is so new and so sudden and so uncouth that it may not suffer for to bear it, but bursteth and sheweth it out in weeping, sobbing, and other bodily stirring. Right as a costrel that is old, when it receiveth new wine that is fresh and mighty, the costrel swelleth out and is in point for to cleave and burst, until the wine have boiled and purged out all uncleanness. But as soon as the wine is fined and cleared, then standeth it still, and the costrel whole. Right so a soul that is old through sin, when it receiveth a little of the love of God, that is so fresh and so mighty that the body is in point for to cleave and for to break, were it not that God keepeth it whole. But yet it bursteth out at the eyes by weeping and at the mouth by speaking, and that is more for weakness and feebleness of the soul than for mickleness of love. For afterward, when love hath boiled out all the uncleanness of the soul by such great fervours, then is the love clear and standeth still ; and then is both the body and the soul mickle more in peace, and yet hath the self soul mickle more love than it had before, though it shew less outward. For it is now all wholly in rest within, and not but little in outward shewing of fervour.

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And therefore I say that these souls that feel such great bodily fervours, though they be in mickle grace are not yet reformed in feeling, but they are greatly disposed toward. For I trow that such a man namely that hath been greatly defouled in sin shall not be reformed in feeling, but if he be first burnt and purified with such great compunctions going before. Another soul that never was mickle defouled with love of the world, but hath aye been kept from great sins in innocence, may lightlier and more privily, without great fervour shewed outward, come to this reforming.

Then is this sooth, as I expect, that such comforts and fervours that a soul feeleth in the state of beginning or of profiting are as it were his ghostly food sent from heaven, for to strengthen him in his travail. Right as a pilgrim travaileth all day meatless and drinkless, and is nearly overcome with weariness, falleth at the last to a good inn, and there hath he meat and drink and is well refreshed for the time : right so ghostly a devout soul that will forsake the love of the world, and would fain love God and setteth all his business thereto, prayeth and travaileth all day ghostly and bodily, and sometime feeleth no comfort nor savour in devotion. Then our Lord having pity over all His creatures, that it should not perish nor default nor turn into heaviness or grouching, sendeth it among His ghostly food,

and comforteth it in devotion as He vouchsafeth. And when the soul feeleth any ghostly comfort, then holdeth he him well paid for all his travail and all the distress that he had on the day, when he fareth well at even by feeling of any grace.

[The self wise falleth it of other souls that are profiting and far forth in grace.]¹ They feel oft times gracious touchings of the Holy Ghost in their souls, both in understanding and sight of ghostly things, and in affection of love. But yet be they not reformed in feeling, nor they are not yet perfect. For why, all such feelings come to them in that state as it were unwarily, for they come or they wit it, and go from them or they wit it, and they cannot come thereto again nor wit not where they should seek it nor where they should find it. For they have not yet no homeliness with them, but suddenly go and suddenly come. They are not yet made lords of themselves by stableness of thought and lasting desire in Jhesu, nor the eye of their soul is not yet opened to the beholding of ghostly things, but they nigh fast toward. And therefore they are not yet reformed in feeling, nor they have not yet the full gift of contemplation.

¹ Interpolated. Not in MS. 2 ; but is in MS. 9.

higher knowing above itself, and that is, the kind of God. For thy soul is but a mirror, in the which thou shalt see God ghostly. And therefore thou shalt first find thy mirror and keep it bright and clean from fleshly filth and worldly vanity, and hold it well up from the earth, that thou mayest see it, and our Lord therein also. For to this end travail all chosen souls in this life, in their meaning and in their intent ; though they have not specially the feeling of this. And therefore it is, as I have said before, that many souls beginning and profiting have many great fervours and mickle sweetness in devotion, and as it seemeth burn all in love ; and yet have they not perfect love, nor ghostly knowing of God. For wit thou well, feel a soul never so mickle fervour, so mickle that him thinketh that the body may not bear it, or though he melt all into weeping, as long as his thinking and his beholding of God is most or all in imagination and not in understanding, he cometh not yet to perfect love nor to contemplation.

For thou shalt understand that the love of God is on three manner wise. All are good, but each one better than other. The first cometh only through faith, without gracious imagination or ghostly knowing of God. This love is in the least soul that is reformed in faith, in the lowest degree of charity ; and it is good, for it sufficeth to salvation. The second love is that a soul

feeletH through faith and imagination of Jhesu in His manhood. This love is better than the first, when the imagination is stirred by grace ; for why, then the ghostly eye is opened in beholding of our Lord's manhood. The third love that the soul feeletH through ghostly sight of the Godhead in the manhood as it may be seen here. That is best and most worthy ; and that is perfect love. This love a soul feeletH not until he be reformed in feeling. Souls beginning and profiting have not this love, for they cannot think on Jhesu nor love Him godly, but as it were all manly and fleshly after the conditions of the likeness of man. And upon that regard they shape all their working, in their thoughts and in their affections. They dread Him as a man, and worship Him and love Him principally in manly imagination, and go no further : as thus, if they have done amiss and trespassed against God, they think then that God is wroth with them as a man should be if they had trespassed against him, and therefore they fall down as it were to the feet of our Lord with scrow of heart and cry mercy. And when they do thus they have a good trust that our Lord of His mercy will forgive them their trespass. This manner of doing is right good, but it is not ghostly as it might be. Also when they will worship God they present them in their thought as it were before our Lord's face in a bodily likeness and

imagine a wonderful light where our Lord Jhesu is, and then they reverence Him, worship Him and dread Him, and fully put them in His mercy for to do with them what He will. Also when they will love God, they behold Him, worship Him, and dread Him as a man, not yet as God in man ; either in His passion or in some other thing of His manhead. And in that beholding they feel their hearts mickle stirred to the love of God.

This manner of working is good and gracious, but it is mickle less and lower than is the working of understanding ; that is when the soul graciously beholdeth God in man. For in our Lord Jhesu are two kinds, the manhood and the Godhead. Then right as the Godhead is more sovereign and more worthy than is the manhood ; right so the ghostly beholding of the Godhead in Jhesu man, is more worthy, more ghostly and more needful than the beholding of the manhood alone, whether he behold the manhood as deadly or as glorified. And right so by the same reason the love that a soul feeleth in thinking and beholding of the Godhead in man, when it is graciously showed, is worthier, ghostlier and more needful than the fervour of devotion that the soul feeleth by imagination only of the manhood, show it never so mickle outward. For in regard of that, this is but manly ; for our Lord to oweth Him not in imagination as He is, nor that

He is, for the soul might not that time for frailty of the flesh-hood suffer so.

Nevertheless unto such souls that cannot think of the Godhead ghostly, that they should not err in their devotion, but that they should be comforted and strengthened through some manner inward beholding of Jhesu, for to forsake sin and the love of the world ; therefore our Lord Jhesu tempereth His unseeable light of His Godhead, and clotheth it under bodily likeness of his manhood, and showeth it to the inner eyes of a soul and feedeth it with love of His precious flesh ghostly ; the which love is of so great might, that it slayeth all wicked love in the soul and strengtheneth it for to suffer bodily penance and other bodily distress in time of need for love of Jhesu. And this is the shadowing of our Lord Jhesu over a chosen soul. In the which shadowing the soul is kept from burning of worldly love, for right as a shadow is made of a light and of a body, right so this ghostly shadow is made of the blessed unseeable light of the Godhead, and of the manhood oned thereto, showed to a devout soul. Of the which shadow the prophet saith thus : *Spiritus ante faciem nostram Christus Dominus : sub umbra ejus vivemus inter gentes.* Our Lord Christ before our face is a spirit ; under His shadow we shall live among folks.¹ That is, our Lord Jhesu in His Godhead is a spirit, that

¹ Lam. iv. 20.

may not be seen of us living in flesh as He is in His blessed light. Therefore we shall live under the shadow of His manhood as long as we are here. But though this be sooth that this love in imagination be good, nevertheless a soul should desire for to have ghostly love in understanding of the Godhead ; for that is the end and the full bliss of the soul, and all other bodily beholdings are but means leading a soul to it. I say not that we should depart God from man,¹ but we should love Jhesu both Gcd and man ; God in man, and man in God ; ghostly, not fleshly.

Thus taught our Lord Mary Magdalen, that should be contemplative, when He said thus : *Noli me tangere, nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum.* Touch Me not, I am not yet styed up to My Father.² That is for to say, Mary Magdalen loved burningly our Lord Jhesu before time of His passion, but her love was mickle bodily, little ghostly. She trowed well that He was God, but she loved Him little as God, for she could not then ; and therefore she suffered all her affection and all her thought fall in Him as He was in form of man. And our Lord blamed her not then, but praised it mickle. But after when He was risen from death and appeared to her, she would have worshipped Him with such manner love as she did before ; and then our Lord forbade her and said thus, "Touch me not." That is : set

¹ MS. 9, "from man in Jhesu."

² John xx. 17.

not the rest nor the love of thine heart in that form of man that thou seest with thy fleshly eyes only, for to rest therein ; for in that form I am not styed up to My Father. That is, I am not even to the Father ; for in form of man I am less than He. Touch Me not so, but set thy thought and thy love into that form in which I am even to the Father, that is the form of the Godhead, and love Me, know Me, and worship Me as God and man godly, not as a man manly. So shalt thou touch Me, for since I am both God and man, and all the cause why I shall be loved and worshipped is for I am God, and for I took the kind of man ; and therefore make Me a God in thine heart, and in thy love, and worship Me in thine understanding as Jhesu God in man, sovereign soothfastness and sovereign goodness and blessed life, for that am I. And thus taught our Lord her as I understand, and also all other souls that are disposed to contemplation and able thereto, that they should do so.

Nevertheless other souls that are not subtle in kind nor are not yet made ghostly through grace, it is good to them that they keep forth their own working in imagination with manly affection, until more grace come freely to them. It is not secure to a man to leave one good utterly till he see and feel a better. Upon the self wise it may be said of other manner feelings that are like to bodily, as hearing of delectable

song or feeling of comfortable heat in the body, or seeing of light, or sweetness of bodily savour. These are not ghostly feelings, for ghostly feelings are felt in the mights of the soul, principally in understanding and love and little in imagination ; but these feelings are in imagination, and therefore they are not ghostly feelings, but when they are best and most true yet are they but outward tokens of the inly grace that is felt in the mights of the soul. This may be openly proved by Holy Writ saying thus : *Apparuerunt Apostolis dispersitae linguae tanquam ignis, seditque supra singulos eorum Spiritus sanctus.* The Holy Ghost appeared to the Apostles in the day of Pentecost in the likeness of burning tongues, and enflamed their hearts, and sat upon ilk of them.¹ Now sooth it is the Holy Ghost, that is God in Himself unseeable, was not that fire nor those tongues that were seen, nor that burning that was felt bodily ; but He was unseeably felt in the might of their souls, for He lightened their reason and kindled their affection through His blessed presence so clearly and so burningly, that they had suddenly the ghostly knowing of soothfastness and the perfection of love, as our Lord behight them, saying thus : *Spiritus sanctus docebit vos omnem veritatem.* That is : the Holy Ghost shall teach you all soothfastness.² Then was that fire and that burning nought else but a bodily

¹ Acts ii. 3.

² John xvi. 13.

token, outward showed in witnessing of that grace that was inwardly felt. And as it was in them, so is it in other souls that are visited and lightened within of the Holy Ghost, and have with that such outward feeling in comfort and witnessing of the inward grace. But that grace is not, as I expect, in all souls that are perfect, but where our Lord will. Other imperfect souls that have such feelings outward and have not yet received the inward grace, it is not good to them for to rest in such feelings too mickle ; but in as mickle as they help the soul to more stable-ness of thought in God, and to more love. For some may be true and some may be feigned, as I have said before.¹

¹ In some MSS. Book III begins here.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

How a soul is reformed in feeling. What it is, and how it is made ; and which be ghostly things that a soul receiveth.

NOW I have said to thee a little of reforming in faith, and also I have touched to thee a little of the forthgoing from that reforming to the higher reforming that is in feeling. Not in that intent as I would by these words set God's works under a law of my speaking ; as for to say, thus worketh God in a soul and none otherwise. Nay, I mean not so : but I say after my simple feeling that our Lord Jhesu worketh thus in some creatures as I expect. And I expect well that He worketh otherwise also, that passeth my wit and my feeling. Nevertheless, whether He work thus or otherwise, by sundry means, in longer time or shorter time, with mickle travail or little travail, if all come to one end, that is to the perfect love of Him, then is it good enough. For if He will give one soul on one day the full grace of contemplation and without any travail, as He well may, as good is that to that soul as if he had been examined, pained, mortified and purified twenty winter time. And therefore upon this

manner wise take thou my saying as I have said ; and namely as I think for to say. For now by the grace of our Lord Jhesu shall I speak a little as me thinketh more openly of reforming in feeling ; what it is and how it is made, and which are ghostly feelings that a soul receiveth.

Nevertheless first, that thou take not this manner of speaking of reforming of a soul in feeling as feigning or fantasy ; therefore I shall ground it in Saint Paul's words, where he saith thus : *Nolite conformari huic seculo, sed reformamini in novitate sensus vestri.* That is : Ye that are through grace reformed in faith, conform you not henceforward to the manners of the world, in pride, in covetise, and in other sins ; but be ye reformed in newness of feeling.¹ Lo, here thou mayest see that Saint Paul speaketh of reforming in feeling ; and what that new feeling is he exposeth in another place thus : *Ut impleamini in agnitione voluntatis ejus, in omni intellectu et sapientia spiritali.* That is : We pray God that ye may be fulfilled in knowing of God's will, in all understanding and in all manner ghostly wisdom.² This is reforming in feeling. For thou shalt understand that the soul hath two manner of feelings : one without of the five bodily wits, another within of the ghostly wits, the which are properly the mights of the soul, mind, reason and will. When these mights are

¹ Rom. xii. 2.

² Col. i. 9.

through grace fulfilled in all understanding of the will of God and ghostly wisdom, then hath the soul new gracious feelings. That this is sooth, he showeth in another place thus : *Renovamini spiritu mentis vestrae, et induite novum hominem, qui secundum Deum creatus est in justitia, sanctitate, et veritate.* Be ye renewed in the spirit of your soul ; that is, ye shall be reformed not in bodily feeling nor in imagination, but in the over part of your reason. And clothe you in a new man, that is shapen after God in righteousness.¹

That is : Your reason, that is properly the image of God through grace of the Holy Ghost [shall be clothed in a new light of soothfastness, holiness and righteousness and],² then is it reformed in feeling.³ For when the soul hath perfect knowing of God, then is it reformed. Thus saith Saint Paul : *Exspoliantes veterem hominem cum actibus suis ; induite novum, qui renovatur in agnitione Dei, secundum imaginem ejus qui creavit eum.* Spoil yourself of the old man with all his deeds ; that is, cast from you the love of the world with all worldly manners. And clothe you in a new man ; that is, ye shall be renewed in the knowing of God after the likeness of Him that made you.⁴

¹ MSS. 3 and 9, "rightwisness, holyness and sothfastnes."

² Added in margin, not in MS. 2, but is in text of MSS. 3 and 9.

³ Eph. iv. 23, 24.

⁴ Col. iii. 9, 10.

By these words mayst thou understand that Saint Paul would have men's souls reformed in perfect knowing of God, for that is the new feeling that he speaketh of generally. And therefore upon his word I shall say more openly of this reforming, as God giveth me grace. For there is two manner knowing of God. One is had principally in imagination, and little in understanding ; this knowing is in chosen souls beginning and profiting in grace, that know God and love Him all manly not ghostly, with manly affections and with bodily likeness, as I have before said. This knowing is good, and it is likened to milk by the which they are tenderly nourished as children, until they be able for to come to the father's board and take on his hand whole bread. Another knowing is principally felt in understanding, when it is comforted and illumined by the Holy Ghost, and little in imagination. For the understanding is lady, and the imagination is as maiden, serving to the understanding when need is. This knowing is whole bread, meat for perfect souls, and it is reforming in feeling.

A A

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

How God openeth the inner eye of the soul for to see Him ; not all at once but by divers times. And of three manner reforming of a soul by ensample.

A SOUL that is called from love of the world and after that it is righted and assayed, mortified and purified, as I have before said ; our Lord Jhesu of His merciful goodness reformeth it in feeling when He voucheth cause. He openeth the inner eyes of the soul when He lighteneth the reason through touching and shining of His blessed light, for to see Him and know Him ; not all fully at once, but little and little by divers times, as the soul may suffer him. He seeth Him not what He is, for that may no creature do in heaven or in earth ; nor he seeth Him not as He is, for that sight is only in the bliss of heaven. But he seeth Him that He is : an unchangeable being, a sovereign might, sovereign soothfastness, sovereign goodness, a blessed life, an endless bliss. This seeth the soul, and mickle more that cometh withall ; not blindly and nakedly and unsavourly, as doth a clerk that seeth Him by his clergy only through might of his naked reason,

but he seeth Him in understanding that He is, comforted and lightened by the gift of the Holy Ghost with a wonderful reverence and a privy burning love and with ghostly savour and heavenly delight, more clearly and more fully than it may be written or said.

This sight, though it be but shortly and little, is so worthy and so mighty that it draweth and ravisheth all the affection of the soul from beholding and the mind of all earthly thing thereto ; for to rest therein evermore if it might. And of this manner sight and knowing the soul groundeth all his inward working in all the affections. For then it dreadeth God in man as soothfastness, wondereth Him as might, loveth Him as goodness. This sight and this knowing of Jhesu, with the blessed love that cometh out of it, may be called reforming of a soul in faith and in feeling that I speak of. It is in faith, for it is murk yet as in regard of that full knowing that shall be in heaven. For then shall we see Him not only that He is, but as He is ; as Saint John saith, *Tunc videbimus eum sicuti est*. That is : Then shall we see Him as He is.¹ Nevertheless it is in feeling also, as in regard of that blind knowing that a soul hath standing only in faith. For this soul knoweth somewhat of the kind of Jhesu God through this gracious sight, but that other knoweth not, but only troweth it is sooth.

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

Nevertheless that thou may the better conceive what I mean, I shall show these three manner reforming of a soul by example of three men standing in light of the sun. Of the which three, one is blind, another may see but he hath his eyes stopped, the third looketh forth full sight.

The blind man hath no manner knowing that he is in the sun, but he troweth it if a true man tell him ; and he betokeneth a soul that is only reformed in faith, that troweth in God as Holy Kirk teacheth, and wots not what. This sufficeth for salvation.

That other man seeth a light of the sun, but he seeth it not clearly, what it is, nor as it is ; for the lid of his eyes letteth him that he may not see. But he seeth through the lid of his eyes a glimmering of great light ; and he betokeneth a soul that is reformed in faith and in feeling, and so is contemplative. For he seeth somewhat of the Godhead of Jhesu through grace ; not clearly nor fully, for the lid, that is his bodily kind, is yet a wall atwixt his kind and the kind of Jhesu God, and letteth him from the clear sight of Him. But he seeth through this wall, after that grace toucheth him more or less, that Jhesu is God and that Jhesu is sovereign goodness and sovereign being and a blessed life, and that all other goodness cometh of Him. This seeth the soul by grace, notwithstanding the bodily kind ; and the more clean and subtle that the soul is made, and

the more it is departed from fleshlihood, the sharper sight it hath and the mightier love of the Godhead of Jhesu. This sight is so mighty that though none other man living would trow in Jhesu, nor love Him, he would never trow the less nor love Him the less ; for he seeth it so soothfastly that he may not untrow it.

The third man, that hath full sight of the sun, he troweth it not for he seeth it fully ; and he betokeneth a full blessed soul that without any wall of body or of sin seeth openly the face of Jhesu in the bliss of heaven. There is no faith, and therefore he is fully reformed in feeling.

There is no state above the second reforming that a soul may come to here in this life ; for this is the state of perfection, and the way to heavenward. Nevertheless all the souls that are in this state are not all alike farforth. For some have it little, shortly and seldom ; and some longer, clearer and oftener ; and some have it clearest, longest, after the abounding of grace ; and yet all these have the gift of contemplation. For the soul hath not perfect sight of Jhesu all at once, but first a little, and after that it profiteth and cometh to more feeling, and as long as it is in this life it may wax more in knowing and in this love of Jhesu. And soothly I wot not what more were left to such a soul that hath felt a little of it, than utterly all other things left and set at nought to tend only thereto ; for to have

clearer sight and clearer love of Jhesu, in whom is all the blessed Trinity.

This manner knowing of Jhesu, as I understand, is the opening of heaven to the eyes of a clean soul, of the which holy men speak in their writings. Not as some ween, that the opening of heaven is as if a soul might see by imagination through the skies above the firmament, how our Lord Jhesu sitteth in His majesty in a bodily light as mickle as an hundred suns. Nay, it is not so : nor though he see never so high on that manner, soothly he seeth not the ghostly heaven. The higher he styeth above the sun for to see Jhesu God so by such imagination, the lower he falleth beneath the sun. Nevertheless this manner sight is sufferable to simple souls, that know no better seek Him that is unseeable.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

How Jhesu is heaven to the soul ; and why He is called Fire.

WHAT is heaven to a reasonable soul ? Soothly nought else but Jhesu God. For if that be heaven only that is above all things, then is God only heaven to man's soul. For He is only above the kind of a soul. Then if a soul may through grace have knowing of that blessed kind of Jhesu, soothly he seeth heaven, for he seeth God.

Therefore there are many men that err in understanding of some words that are said of God, for they understand them not ghostly. Holy writing saith that a soul that will find God shall lift upward the inner eyes and seek God above itself. Then some men that would do after this saying understand this word "above themselves," as for higher setting in stead and worthiness of place, as one element and one planet is above another in setting and worthiness of a bodily place ; but it is not so ghostly. For a soul is above all bodily things not by setting of stead, but by subtlety and worthiness of kind.

Right so on the self wise, God is above all bodily and ghostly creatures not by setting of stead, but through subtlety and worthiness of His unchangeable blessed kind. And therefore he that will wisely seek God and find Him, he shall not run out with his thought as he would climb above the sun and pursue the firmament, and imagine the majesty as it were a light of an hundred suns ; but he shall rather draw down the sun and all the firmament, and forget it and cast it beneath him there he is, and set all this and all bodily things also at nought, and think then if he can ghostly, both of himself and of God also. And if he do thus, then seeth the soul above itself and then seeth it heaven.

Upon this self manner shall this word within be understood. It is commonly said that a soul shall see our Lord within all things and within itself. Sooth it is our Lord is within all creatures, but not on that manner as a kernel is hid within the shell of a nut, or as a little bodily thing is holden within another mickle. But He is within all creatures as holding and keeping them in their being, through subtlety and through might of His own blessed kind and cleanness unseeable. For right as a thing that is most precious and most clean is laid innermost, right so by that likeness it is said that the kind of God, that is most precious, most clean and most ghostly, furthest from bodilihood, is hid within all things.

And therefore he that will seek God within, he shall forget first all bodily thing, for all that is without, and his own body ; and he shall forget thinking of his own soul and think on that unmade kind that is Jhesu, that made him, quickeneth him, holdeth him, and giveth him reason and mind and love ; the which is within him through His might and sovereign subtlety. Upon this manner shall the soul do when grace toucheth it, or else it will but little avail seek Jhesu and to find Him within itself and within all creatures, as me thinketh.

Also it is said in Holy Writ that God is light. So saith Saint John : *Deus lux est*. That is, God is light.¹ This light shall not be understood as for bodily light, but it is understood thus. God is light ; that is, God is truth and soothfastness, for soothfastness is ghostly light. Then he that most graciously knoweth soothfastness, best seeth God. And nevertheless it is likened to bodily light ; for this reason. Right as the sun showeth to the bodily eyes itself and all bodily thing by it ; right so soothfastness, that is God, showeth to the reason of the soul itself first, and by itself all other ghostly thing that needeth to be known of a soul. Thus saith the prophet : *Domine, in lumine tuo videbimus lumen*. Lord, we shall see Thy light by Thy light.² That is : We shall see Thee that art soothfastness by Thyself.

¹ 1 John i. 5.

² Psal. xxxvi. 9.

On the self wise it is said that God is fire : *Deus noster ignis consumens est.* That is : Our Lord is fire wasting.¹ That is for to say : God is not fire elementary, that heateth a body and burneth it ; but God is love and charity. For as fire wasteth all bodily thing that may be wasted, right so the love of God burneth and wasteth all sin out of the soul and maketh it clean, as fire maketh clean all manner metal. These words, and all other that are spoken of our Lord in holy writing by bodily likeness must needs be understood ghostly, else there is no savour in them. Nevertheless the cause why such manner words are said of our Lord in Holy Writ is this. For we are so fleshly that we cannot speak of God nor understand of Him, but if we by such words first be entered in. Nevertheless when the inner eye is opened through grace for to have a little sight of Jhesu, then shall the soul turn lightly enough all such words of bodily things into ghostly understanding.

This ghostly opening of the inner eye into knowing of the Godhead I call reforming in faith and in feeling. For then the soul somewhat feeleth in understanding of that thing that it had before in naked trowing. And that is the beginning of contemplation, of the which Saint Paul saith thus : *Non contemplantibus nobis quae videntur, sed quae non videntur ; quae enim videntur, temporalia sunt, quae autem non videntur,*

¹ Heb. xii. 29.

aeterna sunt. That is : Our contemplation is not in things that are seen, but it is in things unseeable. For things that are seen are passing, but unseeable things are aye lasting.¹ To the which sight every soul should desire for to come to, both here in party and in the bliss of heaven fully. For in that sight and in that knowing of Jhesu is fully the bliss of a reasonable soul, and endless life. *Haec est autem vita aeterna : ut cognoscant te unum Deum, et quem misisti Jhesum Christum.* That is : Father, this is endless life ; that Thy chosen souls know Thee and Thy Son whom Thou hast sent, one soothfast God.²

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

² John xvii. 3.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

How thou mayest see that love formed is not cause why a soul cometh to the ghostly sight of Jhesu ; but love unformed, that is God Himself, is cause of all this knowing.

BUT now wonderest thou, since this knowing of God is the bliss and the end of a soul, why then have I said here before that a soul should nought else covet but only the love of God ; and spake nothing of this sight, that a soul should covet this.

Unto this I may say thus : that the sight of Jhesu is full bliss of a soul, and that is not only for the sight, but it is also for the blessed love that cometh out of that sight. Nevertheless for love cometh out of knowing and not knowing out of love, therefore it is said that in knowing and in sight principally of God with love is the bliss of a soul, and the more he is known the better is he loved. But for as mickle as to this knowing, or to this love that cometh of it, may not the soul come without love, therefore said I that thou shouldest only covet love. For love is cause why a soul cometh to this sight and to this knowing ; and that love is not the love that a soul hath in

itself to God, but the love that our Lord hath to a sinful soul that can right not love Him is cause why this soul cometh to this knowing and to this love that cometh out of it. And on what manner that is, I shall tell thee more openly.

Holy writers say, and sooth it is, that there is two manner of ghostly love. One is called unformed, another is called formed. Love unformed is God Himself, the third Person in the Trinity ; that is, the Holy Ghost. He is love unformed and unmade, as Saint John saith thus : *Deus dilectio est.* God is love,¹ that is, the Holy Ghost. Love formed is the affection of the soul, made by the Holy Ghost of the sight and the knowing of soothfastness, that is God only, stirred and set in him. This love is called formed, for it is made by the Holy Ghost. This love is not God in Himself, for it is made ; but it is the love of the soul, felt of the sight of Jhesu and stirred to Him only. Now may thou see that love formed is not cause why a soul cometh to the ghostly sight of Jhesu, as some men would think that they would love God so burningly as it were by their own might, that they were worthy for to have the ghostly knowing of Him. Nay, it is not so. But love unformed, that is, God Himself, is cause of all this knowing. For a blind wretched soul is so far from the clear knowing and the blessed feeling of His love through sin and frailty

¹ 1 John iv. 8.

of the bodily kind, that it might never come to it were it not the endless mickleness of the love of God. But then because that He loveth us so mickle, therefore He giveth us His love, that is, the Holy Ghost. He is both the giver and the gift, and maketh us then by that gift for to know and love Him. Lo, this is the love that I spake of, that thou shouldest only covet and desire this unformed love that is the Holy Ghost. For soothly a less thing or a less gift than He is may not avail us for to bring us to the blessed sight of Jhesu. And therefore shall we fully desire and ask of Jhesu only this gift of love, that He would for the mickleness of His blessed love touch our hearts with His unseeable light to the knowing of Him, and depart with us of His blessed love, that as He loveth us that we might love Him again. Thus saith Saint John : *Nos diligamus Deum, quoniam ipse prior dilexit nos.* That is : Love we God now for He first loved us.¹ He loved us mickle when He made us to His likeness, but He loved us more when He bought us with His precious blood through wilful taking of death in His manhood from the power of the fiend and from the pain of hell. But He loveth us most when He giveth us the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is love, by the which we know Him and love Him, and are made sure that we are His sons chosen to salvation. For this love we are more bound

¹ 1 John iv. 19.

to Him than for any other love that ever showed He for us, either in our making or in our being. For though He had made us and bought us, but if He save us withal, what profit is it else to us our making or our being? Soothly right none.

Therefore the most token of love showed to us, as me thinketh, is this; that He giveth Himself in His Godhead to our souls. He gave Himself first in His manhood to us for our ransom, when He offered Himself to the Father of heaven upon the altar of the Cross. This was a fair gift, and a great token of love. But when He giveth Himself in His Godhead ghostly to our souls for our salvation, and maketh us for to know Him and love Him, then loveth He us fully. For then giveth He Himself to us; and more might He not give us, nor less might not suffice to us. And for this reason it is said that the righting of a sinful soul through forgiveness of sins is ascribed and appropriated principally to the working of the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost is love, and in the righting of a soul our Lord Jhesu showeth to a soul most of His love, for He doth away all sin and oneth it to Him. And that is the best thing that He may do to a soul, and therefore it is appropriated to the Holy Ghost.

The making of a soul is appropriated to the Father as for the sovereign might and power that He showeth in making of it. The being is ascribed and appropriated to the Son: as for the

sovereign will and wisdom that He showed in His manhood ; for He overcame the fiend principally through wisdom and not through strength. But the righting and the full saving of a soul by forgiveness of sins is appropriated to the third Person, that is, the Holy Ghost. For therein showeth Jhesu most love unto man's soul, and for that thing shall He most be loved again of us. His making is common to us and to all unreasonable creatures. For as He made us of nought, so made He them ; and therefore is this work greatest of might, but not most of love. Also the being is common to us and to all reasonable souls, as to Jews and to Saracens and to false Christian men. For He died for all souls alike and bought them, if they will have the profit of it ; and also it sufficed for the being of all, though it so be that all have it not. And this work was most of wisdom, not most of love. But the righting and the hallowing of our souls through the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is only the working of love ; and that is not common, but it is a special gift only to chosen souls. And soothly that is most working of love to us, that are His chosen children.

This is the love of God that I spake of, which thou shouldest covet and desire ; for this love is God Himself and the Holy Ghost. This love unformed, when it is given to us, it worketh in our soul all that good is, and all that longeth to

goodness. This love loveth us ere that we love Him. For it cleanseth us first of our sins, and maketh us for to love Him, and maketh our will strong for to withstand all sins, and it stirreth us for to assay ourselves through divers exercises both bodily and ghostly in all virtues. It stirreth us also for to forsake the love and the liking of the world ; it slayeth in us all wicked stirrings of sin and fleshly affections and worldly dreads ; it keepeth us from malicious temptations of the fiend ; and it driveth us out from business and vanity of the world, and from conversation of worldly lovers. All this doth the love of God unformed, when He giveth Himself to us. We do right nought but suffer Him, and assent to Him ; for that is the most that we do, that we assent wilfully to His gracious working in us. And yet is that will not of us, but of His making ; so that me thinketh that He doth in us all that is well done, and yet we see it not. And not only doth He thus, but after this love doth more. For He openeth the eyes of the soul and showeth to the soul the sight of Jhesu wonderfully, and the knowing of Him, as the soul may suffer it thus by little and by little ; and by that sight He ravisheth all the affection of the soul to Him.

And then beginneth the soul for to know Him ghostly, and burningly for to love Him ; then seeth the soul somewhat of the kind of the blessed Godhead of Jhesu, how that He is all

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and that He worketh all, and that all good deeds that are done and good thoughts are only of Him. For He is all sovereign might and all sovereign soothfastness and all sovereign goodness ; and therefore every good deed is done of Him and by Him, and He shall only have the worship and the thanks for all good deeds, and nothing but he. For though wretched men steal His worship here for awhile, nevertheless at the last end shall soothfastness show well that Jhesu did all and man did right nought of himself ; and then shall thieves of God's good that are not accorded with Him here in this life for their trespass be damned to the death, and Jhesu shall be fully worshipped and thanked of all blessed creatures for His gracious working.

This love is nought else but Jhesu Himself, that for love worketh all this in a man's soul and reformeth it in feeling to His likeness, as I have before said, and somewhat also I shall say. This love bringeth into the soul the fullhead of all virtues, and maketh them all clean and true, soft and easy, and turneth them all into love and into liking ; and on what manner wise He doth it, I shall tell thee a little afterward. This love draweth the soul from fleshlihood into ghostliness, from earthly feeling into heavenly savour, and from vain beholding of worldly things into contemplation of ghostly creatures, and of God's privities.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

How that some souls love Jhesu by bodily fervours, and by their own manly affections that be stirred by grace and by reason ; and how some love Jhesu more restfully, by ghostly affections only, stirred inward through special grace of the Holy Ghost.

THEN may I say that he that hath most of this love here in this life most pleaseth God, and most clear sight shall have of Him in the bliss of heaven : for he hath the most gift of love here in earth.

This love may not be had by a man's own travail, as some ween. It is freely had of the gracious gift of Jhesu, after mickle bodily and ghostly travail going before. For there are some lovers of God that make themselves for to love God as it were by their own might ; for they strain themselves through great violence, and pant so strongly that they burst into bodily fervours as they would draw down God from heaven to them, and they say in their hearts and with their mouth, " Ah, Lord, I love Thee, and I will love Thee. I would for Thy love suffer death." And in this manner working they feel

great fervour and mickle grace. And sooth it is, as me thinketh, this working is good and meedful, if it be well tempered with meekness and with discretion. But nevertheless these men love not, nor have not the gift of love, on that manner as I spake of, nor they ask it not so. For a soul that hath the gift of love through gracious beholding of Jhesu as I mean, or else if he have it not yet but would have it, he is not busy for to strain himself over his might, as it were by bodily strength, for to have it by bodily fervours and so for to feel of the love of God. But him thinketh that he is right nought, and that he can do right nought of himself ; but as it were a dead thing only hanging and borne up by the mercy of God. He seeth well that Jhesu is all and doth all, and therefore asketh he nought else but the gift of His love. For since that the soul seeth that his own love is nought, therefore it would have his love, for that is enough. Therefore prayeth he, and that desireth he, that the love of God would touch him with His blessed light, that he might see a little of Him by His gracious presence, for then should he love Him ; and so by this way cometh the gift of love, that is God, into a soul.

The more that the soul noughteth itself through grace by sight of His soothfastness, sometime without any fervour outward shewed, and the less it thinketh that it loveth or seeth

God, the nearer it nigheth for to perceive the gift of the blessed love. For then is love master, and worketh in the soul and maketh it for to forget itself, and for to see and behold only how love doth. And then is the soul more suffering than doing, and that is clean love. Thus Saint Paul meant when he said thus : *Quicumque Spiritu Dei aguntur, ii filii Dei sunt.* All these that are wrought with the Spirit of God, are God's sons.¹ That is, these souls that are made so meek and so buxom to God that they work not of themselves, but suffer the Holy Ghost stir them and work in them the feelings of love with a full sweet accord to His stirrings, these are specially God's sons, most like unto Him.

Other souls that cannot love thus, but travail themselves by their own affections and stir themselves through thinking of God and bodily exercise, for to draw out of themselves by mastery the feeling of love by fervours and other bodily signs, love not ghostly. They do well and meedfully, so be that they will know meekly that their working is not kindly the gracious feeling of love ; but it is a manly doing by a soul at the bidding of reason. And nevertheless through the goodness of God, because that the soul doth that in it is, these manly affections of the soul stirred into God by man's working are turned into ghostly affections, and are made needful as if

¹ Rom. viii. 14.

they had been done ghostly in the first beginning. And this is a great courtesy of our Lord, showed to meek souls, that turneth all these manly affections of kindly love into the affection and into the meed of His own love ; as if He had wrought them all fully to Himself. And so these affections so turned may be called affections of ghostly love through purchase, not through kindly bringing forth of the Holy Ghost. I say not that a soul may work such manly affections only of itself without grace ; for I wot well that Saint Paul saith that we may right nought do nor think that good is of ourself without grace. *Non enim quod sufficientes simus cogitare aliquid ex nobis, quasi ex nobis ; sed sufficientia nostra ex Deo est.* That is : We that love God ween not that we suffice for to love or for to think good of ourselves only, but our sufficing is of God.¹ For God worketh in us all, both good will and good work, as Saint Paul saith : *Deus est qui operatur in nobis et velle et perficere pro bona voluntate.* That is : It is God that worketh in us good will and fulfilling of good will.² But I say, that such affections are good,³ made by the mean of a soul after the general grace that He giveth to all His chosen souls ; not of special grace made ghostly by touching of His gracious presence, as He worketh in His perfect lovers, as I have before

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5.² Phil. ii. 13.³ MS. 9, of God.

said. For in imperfect lovers of God love worketh all farly, by the affections of man ; but in perfect lovers, love worketh nearly,¹ by His own ghostly affections, and slayeth in a soul for the time all other affections both fleshly, kindly, and manly. And that is properly the working of love by himself. This love may be had a little in part here in a clean soul, through the ghostly sight of Jhesu ; but in the bliss of heaven it is fulfilled by clear sight in His Godhead, for there shall none affection be felt in a soul, but all godly and ghostly.

¹ MS. 9, veryli.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

That the gift of love among all the gifts of Jhesu is worthiest and most profitable; and how Jhesu doth all that is well done in His lovers only for love. And how love maketh the using of all virtues and all good deeds, light and easy.

ASK thou then of God nothing but this gift of love, that is, the Holy Ghost. For among all the gifts that our Lord giveth is there none so good nor so profitable, so worthy nor so excellent, as this is. For there is no gift of God that is both the giver and the gift, but this gift of love; and therefore it is the best and the worthiest. The gift of prophecy, the gift of miracles-working, the gift of great knowing and counselling, and the gift of great fasting or of great penance-doing, or any other such, are great gifts of the Holy Ghost; but they are not the Holy Ghost, for a reprov'd and a damnable might have all those gifts as well as a chosen soul.

And therefore all these manner gifts are not greatly for to desire, nor mickle for to charge. But the gift of love is the Holy Ghost, God Himself; and Him may no soul have and be damned withall, for that gift only saveth it from damna-

tion, and maketh it God's son, perceiver of heavenly heritage. And that love as I have before said is not the affection of love that is formed in a soul ; but it is the Holy Ghost Himself, that is love unformed, that saveth a soul. For He giveth Himself to a soul first, ere the soul love Him ; and He formeth the affection in the soul and maketh the soul for to love Him only for Himself. And not only that, but also by this gift the soul loveth itself and all his even-christians, as itself, only for God ; and this is the gift of love that maketh division atwixt chosen souls and reprov'd. And this gift maketh full peace atwixt God and a soul and oneth all blessed creatures wholly in God ; for it maketh Jhesu for to love us, and us Him also, and ilk of us for to love other in Him.

Covet this gift of love principally, as I have said. For if he will of his grace give it on that manner wise, it shall open and lighten the reason of thy soul for to see soothfastness, that is God and ghostly things.¹ And it shall stir thy affection wholly and fully for to love Him [and it shall work in thy soul only as He will, and thou shalt behold Jhesu²], reverently with softness of love and see how He doth thus. Thus biddeth He by His prophet that we should do, saying thus : *Vacate, et videte quoniam ego sum Deus* : Cease ye,

¹ MS. 3, Jhesu and gostly thinges.

² Interpolated. Not in MS. 2. Is in text of MSS. 3 and 9.

and see that I am God.¹ That is, ye that are reformed in feeling and have your inner eyes opened into sight of ghostly things, cease ye some time of outward working, and see that I am God. That is, "See only how I, Jhesu, God and man do ; behold ye Me, for I do all. I am love, and for love I do all that I do, and ye do nought. And that this is sooth I shall show you, for there is no good deed done in you nor good thought felt in you, but if it be done through Me, that is, through might and wisdom and love, mightily, wittily and lovely, else is it not good deed. But now is it sooth that I, Jhesu, am both might and wisdom and blessed love, and ye nought ; for I am God. Then may ye well see that I do all your good deeds, and all your good thoughts, and all your good loves in you, and ye do right nought. And yet nevertheless be these good deeds called yours, not for thee work them principally, but for I give them to you for love that I have to you. And therefore, since that I am Jhesu, and for love do all this, cease then of the beholding of yourself and set yourself at nought, and look on me and see that I am God, for I do all this." This is somewhat of the meaning of that verse of David before said.

See then and behold what love worketh in a chosen soul that he reformeth in feeling to his likeness, when the reason is lightened a little

¹ Psa, xlvii, 10.

to the ghostly knowing of Jhesu, and to the feeling of His Love. Then bringeth love into the soul the fullhead of virtues, and turneth them all into softness and into liking as it were without working of the soul ; for the soul striveth not mickle for the getting of them as it did before, but it hath them easily and feeleth them restfully, only through the gift of love that is the Holy Ghost. And that is a well great comfort and gladness unspeakable, when it feeleth suddenly, and wots never how, the virtue of meekness and patience, sobriety and sadness, chastity and cleanness, love to his even-christian, and all other virtues, the which were to him travailous, painful, and hard for to keep, are now turned into softness and liking, and into wonderful lightness ; so far forth that him thinketh it no mastery nor no hardness for to keep any virtue, but it is most liking to him for to keep it. And all this maketh love.

Other men that stand in the common way of charity, and are not yet so far forth in grace, but work under the bidding of reason, they strive and fight all day against sins for the getting of virtues ; and sometime they be above and sometime beneath, as wrestlers are. These men do full well. They have virtues in reason and in will, not in savour nor in love, for they fight themselves as it were by their own might for them. And therefore may they not have full

rest nor fully the higher hand. Nevertheless they shall have mickle meed, but they are not yet meek enough. They have not put themselves all fully in God's hand, for they see Him not yet.

But a soul that hath the ghostly sight of Jhesu taketh no great care of striving for virtues, he is not busy about them specially ; but he setteth all his business for to keep that sight and that beholding of Jhesu that it hath ; for to hold the mind stably thereto, and bind the love only to it that it fall not therefrom, and forgetteth all other things as mickle as it may. And when it doth thus then is Jhesu soothfastly master in the soul against all sins and overshadoweth it with His blessed presence and getteth it all virtues ; and the soul is so comforted, and so borne up with the soft feeling of love that it hath of the sight of Jhesu, that it feeleth no great distress outward. And thus slayeth love generally all sins in a soul, and reformeth it in new feeling of virtues.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

How love, through gracious beholding of Jhesu, slayeth all stirrings of pride and maketh the soul meek perfectly ; for it maketh the soul to lose savour in all earthly worship.

NEVERTHELESS how love slayeth sins and reformeth virtues in a soul more specially shall I say ; and first of pride, and of meekness that is contrary thereto. Thou shalt understand that there is two manner of meekness. One is had by working of reason. Another is felt of the special gift of love. Both are of love. But that one love worketh by reason of the soul ; that other he worketh by himself. The first is imperfect, that other is perfect.

The first meekness a man feeleth of beholding of his own sins and of his own wretchedness, through the which beholding he thinketh himself unworthy for to have any gift of grace or any meed of God ; but him thinketh it enough that He would of great mercy grant him forgiveness of his sins. And also he thinketh him because of his own sins that he is worse than the most sinner that liveth, and that every man doth better than he. And so by such beholding

casteth he himself down in his thought under all men ; and he is busy for to withstand the stirring of pride as mickle as he may, both bodily pride and ghostly, and despiseth himself, so that he assenteth not to the feelings of pride. And if his heart be taken sometime with it, that it be defouled with vain joy of worship or of cunning or of praising or of any other thing, as soon as he may perceive it he is evil paid with himself, and hath sorrow for it in heart, and asketh forgiveness of it of God and showeth him to his confessor and accuseth himself meekly, and receiveth his penance. This is good meekness, but it is not yet perfect, for it is of souls that are beginning and profiting in grace, caused of beholding of sins. Love worketh this meekness by reason of the soul.

Perfect meekness a soul feeleth of the sight and the ghostly knowing of Jhesu. For when the Holy Ghost lighteneth the reason into the sight of soothfastness, how Jhesu is all and that He doth all, the soul hath so great love, so great joy in that ghostly sight for it is so soothfast, that it forgetteth itself and fully leaneth to Jhesu with all the love that it hath for to behold Him. It taketh no care of unworthiness¹ of itself [nor of sins before done. But setteth at nought itself ²] with all the sins and all the good deeds that ever it did, as if there were nothing but Jhesu.

¹ MSS. 2 and 3, Worthiness of itself.

² Interlined. Not in MS. 2.

Thus meek David was when he said thus : *Et substantia mea tanquam nichilum ante te.* That is : Lord Jhesu, the sight of Thy blessed unmade substance and thine endless being showeth well unto me that my substance and the being of my soul is as nought anent Thee.¹ Also anent his even-christian he hath no regard to him, nor deeming of him, whether they be better or worse than himself is. For he holdeth himself and all other men as it were even, alike nought of themselves anent God ; and that is sooth, for all the goodness that is done in himself or in them is only of God, whom he beholdeth as all. And therefore setteth he all other creatures as nought, as he doth himself. Thus meek was the prophet when he said thus : *Omnes gentes quasi non sint, sic sunt coram eo, et quasi nichilum et inane reputatae sunt ei.* All men are before our Lord as nought and as inane, and nought they are accounted to Him.² That is, anent the endless being and the unchangeable kind of Godman-kind is as nought. For of nought is it made, and to nought should it turn, but if he kept it in the being that made it of nought. This is soothfastness, and this should make a soul meek if it might see through grace this soothfastness. Therefore when love openeth the inner eyes of the soul for to see this soothfastness with other circumstances that come withall, then beginneth

¹ Psa. xxxix. 5.

² Isaiah xl. 17.

the soul for to be soothfastly meek. For then by the sight of God it feeleth and seeth itself as it is ; and then forsaketh the soul the beholding and the leaning to itself, and fully falleth to the beholding of Him. And when it doth so, then setteth the soul nought by all the joy and the worship of the world ; for the joy of worldly worship is so little and so nought in regard of that joy and that love that it feeleth in the ghostly sight of Jhesu and knowing of soothfastness, that though it might have it without any sin he would not of it. Nor though men would worship him, praise him, favour him, or set him at greater state, it liketh him nought, nor though he had the cunning of all the seven arts, of clergy, and of all crafts under sun, or had power for to work all manner miracles, he hath no more dainty of all this nor no more savour of them than for to gnaw on a dry stick. He had well liefer forget all this and for to be alone out of the sight of the world, than for to think on them and be worshipped of all men. For the heart of a true lover of Jhesu is made so mickle and so large through a little sight of Him and a little feeling of His ghostly love, that all the liking and all the joy of all earth may not suffice for to fill a corner of it. And then seemeth it well that these wretched worldly lovers that are as it were ravished in love of their own worship, and pursue after it for to have it with

all the might and the will that they have, they have no savour in this meekness, they are wonder far therefrom. But the lover of Jhesu hath this meekness lastingly, and that not with heaviness and stirring for it, but with liking and gladness : the which gladness it hath, not for it forsaketh the worship of the world, for that were a proud meekness that longeth to an hypocrite, but for he hath a sight and a ghostly knowing of soothfastness and of worthiness of Jhesu through the gift of the Holy Ghost.

That reverent sight and that lovely beholding of Jhesu comforteth the soul so wonderfully and beareth it up so mightily and so softly, that it may not like nor fully rest in none earthly joy, nor it will not. He maketh no account whether men blame him or praise him, worship him or despise him as for himself. He sets it not at heart neither for to be well paid if men despise him, as for more meekness, nor for to be evil paid that men should worship him or praise him. He had liefer for to forget both that one and that other, and only think on Jhesu, and get meekness by that way ; and that is mickle the securer way, whoso might come thereto. Thus did David when he said : *Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, quoniam ipse evellet de laqueo pedes meos.* That is, mine eyes are aye open to Jhesu our Lord, for why He shall keep my feet from snares of sins.¹

¹ Psa. xxv. 15.

For when he doth so, then forsaketh he utterly himself and undercasteth him wholly to Jhesu. And then is he in a secure ward, for the shield of soothfastness, the which he holdeth, keepeth him so well that he shall not be hurt through no stirring of pride as long as he beholdeth him within that shield. As the prophet saith : *Scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus ; non timebis a timore nocturno*. Soothfastness shall beclip thee with a shield, and that is if thou, all other things left, only behold Him. For then shalt not thou dread for the night's dread,¹ that is, thou shalt not dread the spirit of pride, whether he come by night or by day, as the next verse saith after thus : *A sagitta volante in die*.² Pride cometh by night for to assail a soul, when it is despised and reprov'd of other men, that it should by that fall in heaviness and into sorrow. It cometh also as an arrow flying in the day, when a man is worshipped and praised of all men, whether it be for worldly doing or for ghostly, that he should have vain joy in himself restingly in a passing thing. This is a sharp arrow and a perilous ; it flieth swiftly, it striketh softly, but it woundeth deadly. But the lover of Jhesu, that stably beholdeth Him by devout prayers and busy thinking on Him, is so belapped with the sure shield of soothfastness that he dreadeth not, for this arrow may not enter into the soul nor

¹ Psa. xci. 5.

² Psa. xci. 6.

though it come, it hurteth not, but glinteth away and passeth forth. And thus is the soul made meek, as I understand, by the working of the Holy Ghost, that is, the gift of love ; for He openeth the eyes of the soul for to see and love Jhesu, and He keepeth the soul in that sight restfully and securely, and He slayeth all the stirrings of pride wonder privily and softly, and the soul wots never how, and also He bringeth in by that way soothfastly and lovely the virtue of meekness. All this doth love, but not in all His lovers alike full. For some have this grace but shortly and little, as it were in the beginning of it, and a little assaying toward ; for their conscience is not yet cleansed fully through grace. And some have it more fully, for they have clearer sight of Jhesu, and they feel more of His love. And some have it most fully, for they have the full gift of contemplation. Nevertheless he that least hath on this manner as I have said, soothly he hath the gift of perfect meekness, for he hath the gift of perfect love.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

How love slayeth all stirrings of wrath and envy softly, and reformeth in the soul the virtues of peace and patience and of perfect charity to his even-christian, as he did specially in the Apostle.

LOVE worketh wisely and softly in a soul where he will, for he slayeth mightily ire and envy and all passions of angriness and melancholy in it, and bringeth into the soul virtues of patience and mildness, peaceability and amity to his even-christian. It is full hard and a great mastery to a man that standeth only in working of his own reason for to keep patience, holy rest and softness in heart, and charity to his even-christian if they trouble him unreasonably and do him wrong, that he shall not somewhat do again to them through stirring of ire or of melancholy, either in speaking or in working or in both. And nevertheless though a man be stirred or troubled in himself and made unrestful, so be that it be not too mickle, passing over the bounds of reason, and that he keep his hand and his tongue and be ready for to forgive the trespass when mercy is asked, yet this man hath the virtue of patience,

though it be but weakly and nakedly; for as mickle as he would have it, and travaileth busily in refraining of his unreasonable passions, that he might have it, and also is sorry that he hath it not as he should. But to a true lover of Jhesu it is no great mastery for to suffer all this, for why love fighteth for him, and slayeth wonder softly such stirring of wrath and of melancholy, and maketh his soul so easy, so peaceable, so suffering and so godly through the ghostly sight of Jhesu with the feeling of His blessed love, that though he be despised and reprov'd of other men, or take wrong or harm, shame or villainy, he chargeth it not. He is not mickle stirred against them, he will not be angered nor stirred against them; for if he were mickle stirred he should forbear the comfort that he feeleth within his soul, but that will he not. He may lightlier forget all the wrong that is done to him, than another man may forgive it though mercy were asked. And so he had well liefer forget it than forgive it; for him thinketh it so most ease to him.

And love doth all this, for love openeth the eyes of the soul to the sight of Jhesu, and stableth it with the liking of love that it feeleth by that sight, and comforteth it so mightily that it taketh no care; what so men jangle or do against him it hangeth nothing upon him. The most harm that he might have were a forbearing of that ghostly sight of Jhesu. And therefore it is liefer to him

for to suffer all harm than that alone. All this may the soul well do and easily, without great troubling of the ghostly sight, when distress falleth all without-forth and toucheth not the body, as is backbiting or scorning or spoiling of such as he hath. All this grieveth not. But it goeth somewhat near when the flesh is touched, and he feeleth smart ; then is it harder. Nevertheless though it be hard and impossible to the frail kind of man to suffer bodily penance gladly and patiently, without bitter stirrings of ire, anger and melancholy, it is not impossible to love, that is the Holy Ghost, for to work this in a soul where He toucheth with the blessed gift of love. But He giveth a soul that is in that plight mighty feelings of love, and wonderfully fasteneth it to Jhesu, and departeth it wonder far from the sensualities through His privy might, and comforteth it so sweetly by His blessed presence that the soul feeleth little pain or else none of the sensuality ; and this is a special grace given to the holy martyrs. This grace had the Apostles, as Holy Writ saith of them thus : *Ibant Apostoli gaudentes a conspectu concilii, quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Christi contumeliam pati.* That is, the Apostles came joying from the council of the Jews when they were beaten with scourges, and they were glad that they were worthy for to suffer any bodily distress for the love of Jhesu.¹

¹ Acts v. 41.

They were not stirred to ire nor to fellness, to be venged of the Jews that beat them ; as a worldly man would be when he suffereth a little harm, be it never so little, of his even-christian. Nor they were not stirred to pride nor to highness of themselves and to disdain and to deeming of the Jews, as hypocrites and heretics are that will suffer mickle bodily pain, and are sometime ready for to suffer death with great gladness and with mighty will as it were in the name of Jhesu for love of Him. Soothly that love and that gladness that they have in suffering of bodily mischief is not of the Holy Ghost ; it cometh not from the fire that burneth in the high altar of heaven, but it is feigned by the fiend enflamed of hell. For it is fully mixed with the height of pride and of presumption in themselves, and despite and deeming and disdain of them that thus punish them. They ween yet that all is charity and that they suffer all that for the love of God, but they are beguiled of the midday fiend. A true lover of Jhesu, when he suffereth harm of his even-christian, is so strengthened through the grace of the Holy Ghost, and is made so meek, so patient and peaceable, and that soothfastly, that what wrong or harm it be that he suffereth of his even-christian he keepeth aye meekness. He despiseth him not, he denieth him not, but prayeth for him in his heart and hath of him pity and compassion, mickle more

tenderly than of another man that never did him harm ; and soothly better loveth him, and more fervently desireth the salvation of his soul, because that he seeth that he shall have so mickle ghostly profit of the evil deed of that other man, though it be against his will. But this love and this meekness worketh only the Holy Ghost, above the kind of man,^e in them that He maketh true lovers of Jhesu.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

How love slayeth covetise, lechery, and gluttony, and slayeth the fleshly savour and delight in all the five bodily wits softly and easly through a gracious beholding of Jhesu.

COVETISE also is slain in a soul by the working of love, for it maketh the soul so covetous of ghostly good and to heavenly riches so ardent, that it setteth right nought by all earthly riches. It hath no more dainty in having of a precious stone, than in a chalk stone ; nor no more love hath he in an hundred pound of gold than in a pound of lead. It setteth all thing that shall perish at one price, no more chargeth that one than that other as in his love. For it seemeth well that all these earthly things that worldly men set so great price on, and love so daintily, shall pass away and turn to nought, both the thing in itself and the love of it. And therefore he bringeth it in his thought betime into that plight that it shall be after, and so accounteth it as nought. And when worldly lovers strive and fight and plead for earthly good, who may first have it, the lover of Jhesu striveth with no man but keepeth himself in peace and holdeth

him paid with that that he hath, and will strive for no more ; for him thinketh that him needeth no more of all the riches in earth than a scant bodily sustenance for to save the bodily life withal, as long as God will, and that he may lightly have, and therefore will he no more. He is well paid when he hath no more than scantily him needeth for the time, that he may freely be discharged from business about the keeping and the dispending of it, and fully give his heart and his business about the seeking of Jhesu, for to find Him in cleanness of spirit. For that is all his covetise, for why, only clean of heart shall see him. Also fleshly love of father and of mother and of other worldly friends hangeth not upon him ; it is even cut from his heart with the sword of ghostly love, that he hath no more affection to father or mother or to any worldly friend than he hath to another man, but if he see or feel in them more grace or more virtue than in other men. Out-taken this, that he had liefer that his father and his mother had the self grace that some other men have ; but nevertheless if they be not so, then loveth he other men better than them, and that is charity. And so slayeth God's love covetise of the world, and bringeth into the soul poverty in spirit.

And that doth love not only in them that have right nought of worldly good, but also in some

creatures that are in great worldly state and have dispending of earthly riches. Love slayeth in some of them covetise, so far forth that they have no more liking nor savour in having of them than in a straw. Nor though they be lost for default of them that should keep them, they set nought thereby ; for why, the heart of God's lover is through the gift of the Holy Ghost taken so fully with the sight and the love of another thing, that is so precious and so worthy, that it will receive none other love restingly that is contrary thereto.

And not only doth love this, but also it slayeth the liking of lechery and all other bodily uncleanness, and bringeth into the soul very chastity, and turneth it into liking. For the soul feeleth so great delight in the sight of Jhesu that it liketh for to be chaste, and it is no great hardness to it for to keep chastity, for it is so most easy and most at rest.

And upon the self-wise the gift of love slayeth fleshly lusts of gluttony, and maketh the soul sober and temperate, and beareth it up so mightily that it may not rest in liking of meat and drink, but it taketh meat and drink, what it be that least grieveth the bodily complexion, if it may lightly come thereto ; not for love of itself, but for love of God. On this manner wise. The lover of God seeth well that him needeth for to keep his bodily life with meat and

drink as long as God will suffer them to be together. Then shall this be the discretion of the lover of Jhesu, as I understand, that hath feeling and working in love ; that upon what manner that he may most keep his grace whole, and least be letted from working in it through taking of bodily sustenance, so shall he do. That manner meat that least letteth and least troubleth the heart and may keep the body in strength, be it flesh, be it fish, be it but bread and ale, that I trow the soul chooseth for to have if it may come thereby. For all the business of the soul is aye for to think on Jhesu with reverent love, without letting of anything, if that it might. And therefore since that it must needs somewhat be letted and hindered, the less it is letted and hindered by meat or drink or any other thing the liefer it is. It had liefer use the best meat and most of price that is under sun, if it less letteth the keeping of his heart, than for to take but bread and water if that letteth him more ; for he hath no regard for to get him great meed for the pain of fasting and be put thereby from softness in heart. But all his business is for to keep his heart as stably as he may in the sight of Jhesu and in the feeling of His love. And soothly as I trow, he might with less liking use the best meat that is good in the own kind, than another man that worketh all in reason without the special gift of love should

be able to use the worst, out-taking meat that through craft of curiosity is only made for lust : that manner of meat may he not well accord withall. And also on that other side, if little meat, as only bread and ale, most helpeth and easeth his heart and keepeth it most in peace, it is then most lief to him for to use it so : and namely if he feel bodily strength only of the gift of love withall.

And yet doth love more, for it slayeth accidie and fleshly idleness, and maketh the soul lively and speedy to the service of Jhesu ; so far forth that it coveteth aye to be occupied in goodness, namely inward in beholding of Him, by the virtue of the which the soul hath savour and ghostly delight in praying, in thinking, and in all other manner of doing that needeth for to be done, after the state or degree that he standeth in asketh, whether he be religious or secular, without heaviness or painful bitterness.

Also it slayeth the vain liking of the five bodily wits. First the sight of the eyes, that the soul hath no liking in the sight of any worldly thing ; but it feeleth rather pain and distress in beholding of it, be it never so fair, never so precious, never so wonderful. And therefore as worldly lovers run out sometime for to see new things, for to wonder on them, and so for to feed their hearts with the vain sight of them ; right so a lover of Jhesu is busy for to run away

and withdraw him from the sight of such manner things, that the inner sight be not letted, for he seeth ghostly another manner thing that is fairer and more wonderful, and that would he not forbear.

Right on the self-wise is it of speaking and hearing ; it is a pain to the soul of a lover for to speak or hear anything that might let the freedom of his heart for to think on Jhesu. What song or melody or minstrelsy outward that it be, if it let the thought that it may not freely and restfully pray or think on Him, it liketh him right nought ; and the more delectable that it is to other men, the more unsavoury it is to him. And also for to hear any manner speaking of other men, but if it be somewhat touching the working of his soul in the love of Jhesu, it liketh him right nought. He is else right soon irked of it. He had well liefer be in peace and hear right nought nor speak right nought, than for to hear the speaking and the teaching of the greatest clerk of earth, with all the reasons that he could say to him through man's wit, but if he could speak feelingly and stirringly of the love of Jhesu. For that is his craft principally, and therefore would he nought else speak, hear nor see, but that might help him and further him into more knowing and to better feeling of Him. Of worldly speech it is no doubt that he hath no savour in speaking nor in hearing of it, nor in

worldly tales, nor in tidings, nor in none such vain jangling that longeth not to him.

And so it is of smelling and savouring and touching; the more that the thought should be distracted and broken from ghostly rest by the use either of smelling or savouring or of any of the bodily wits, the more he fleeth it. The less that he feeleth of them, the liefer is him, and if he might live in the body without the feeling of any of them, he would never feel them. For they trouble the heart oft times and put it from rest, and they may not be fully eschewed. Nevertheless the love of Jhesu is sometime so mighty in a soul that it overcometh and slayeth all that is contrary thereto.

CHAPTER FORTY

What virtues and graces a soul receiveth through opening of the inner eye into the gracious beholding of Jhesu ; and how it may not be got only through man's travail, but through special grace and travail also.

THUS worketh love outward in a soul, opening the ghostly eyes into beholding of Jhesu by inspiration of special grace, and maketh it clean subtle and able to the work of contemplation. What this opening of the ghostly eyes is the greatest clerk in earth could not imagine by his wit, nor show fully by his tongue. For it may not be got by study nor through man's travail only, but principally by grace of the Holy Ghost and with travail of man. I dread mickle to speak aught of it, for me thinketh I cannot ; it passeth mine assay, and my lips are unclean. Nevertheless, for I expect love asketh and love biddeth, therefore I shall say a little more of it as I hope love teacheth. This opening of the ghostly eyes is that lighty murkness and rich nought that I spake of before, and it may be called : *Purity of spirit and ghostly rest, inward stillness and peace of conscience, highness of*

thought and onlynness of soul, a lively feeling of grace and privity of heart, the waking sleep of the spouse and tasting of heavenly savour, burning in love and shining in light, entry of contemplation and reforming in feeling. All these reasons are said in Holy Writ by divers men, for ilk of them spake of it after his feeling in grace, and though all they are divers in showing of words, nevertheless they are all one in sense of soothfastness.

For a soul that through visiting of grace hath one, hath all ; for why, a sighing soul to see the face of Jhesu, when it is touched through special grace of the Holy Ghost, it is suddenly changed and turned from the plight that it was in to another manner feeling. It is wonderfully departed and drawn first into itself from the love and liking of all earthly thing ; so mickle that it hath lost savour of the bodily love and of all thing that is, save only Jhesu. *And then is it clean from all the filth of sin.* So far forth that the mind of it and all unordained affection of any creature, is suddenly washed and wiped away, that there is no mean letting atwixt Jhesu and the soul, but only the bodily life. *And then is it in ghostly rest ;* for why, all painful doubts and dreads and all other temptations of ghostly enemies are driven out of the heart, that they trouble not nor sink not therein for the time. It is in rest from the noye of worldly business and painful vexings of wicked stirrings ; but it is

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full busy in the free ghostly working of love ; and the more it travaileth so, the more rest it feeleth.

This restful travail is full far from fleshly idleness and from blind security. It is full of ghostly work ; but it is called rest, for grace looseth the heavy yoke of fleshly love from the soul, and maketh it mighty and free through the gift of the Holy Ghostly love, for to work gladly, softly and delectably in all thing that grace stirreth it for to work in. And therefore is it called an holy idleness and a rest most busy ; and so is it, *in stillness* from the great crying and the beastly noise of fleshly desires and unclean thoughts.

This stillness maketh the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in beholding of Jhesu. For why, His voice is so sweet and so mighty that it putteth silence in a soul to jangling of all other speakers ; for it is a voice of virtue, softly sounded in a clean soul, of the which the prophet saith thus : *Vox Domini in virtute*. That is : The voice of our Lord Jhesu is in virtue.¹ This voice is a lively word and a speedy, as the Apostle saith : *Vivus est sermo Domini et efficax, penetrabilior omni gladio*. That is : Quick is the word of Jhesu and speedy, more piercing than any sword is.² Through speaking of His word is fleshly love slain, and the soul kept in silence from all wicked stirrings. Of this silence it is

¹ Psa. xxix. 4.

² Heb. iv. 12.

said in the Apocalypse thus : *Factum est silentium in coelo, quasi media hora.* Silence was made in heaven as it were an half hour.¹ Heaven is a clean soul, through grace lifted up from earthly love to heavenly conversation, and so is it in silence ; but for as mickle as that silence may not last whole continually, for corruption of the bodily kind, therefore it is likened but to the time of an half hour. A full short time the soul thinketh that it is, be it never so long, and therefore it is but as an half hour. And then hath it *peace in conscience* ; for why, grace putteth out gnawing and pricking, stirring and fliting of sins and bringeth in peace and accord, and maketh Jhesu and a soul both at one in full accordance of will. There is none upbraiding of sins nor sharp reproving of defaults made that time in a soul, for they are kissed and friends ; all is forgiven that was misdome.

Thus feeleth the soul then with full meek security and great ghostly gladness, and it conceiveth a full great boldness of salvation by this accord-making, for it heareth a privy witnessing in conscience of the Holy Ghost, that he is a chosen son to heavenly heritage. Thus Saint Paul saith : *Ipse Spiritus testimonium perhibet spiritui nostro, quod filii Dei sumus.* That is : The Holy Ghost beareth witness to our spirit, that we are God's sons.² This

¹ Rev. viii. 1.

² Rom. viii. 16.

witnessing of conscience, soothfastly felt through grace, is the very joy of the soul, as the Apostle saith : *Gloria mea est testimonium conscienciæ mea*. That is : My joy is the witness of my conscience ; ¹ and that is when it witnesseth peace and accord, true love and friendship atwixt Jhesu and a soul. And when it is in this peace, then is it *in highness of thought*.²

When the soul is bound with love of the world, then is it beneath all creatures ; for ilk a thing overgoeth it and beareth it down by mastery, that it may not see Jhesu nor love Him. For right as the love of the world is vain and fleshly, right so the beholding and thinking and the using of creatures is fleshly ; and that is a thraldom of the soul. But then through opening of the ghostly eyes into Jhesu, the love is turned and the soul is raised up after his own kind above all bodily creatures ; and then the beholding and thinking and the using of them is ghostly, for the love is ghostly. The soul hath then full great disdain for to be buxom to love of bodily things ; for it is high set above them through grace. It setteth nought by all the world, for why, all shall pass and perish. Unto this highness of heart, whilst the soul is kept therein, cometh none error nor deceit of the fiend, for Jhesu is soothfastly in sight of the soul that

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² MS. 3, "Heighenes or depnes of thought."

time and all thing beneath him. Of this speaketh the prophet thus : *Accedat homo ad cor altum ; et exaltabitur Deus.* Come man to high heart and God shall be highed.¹ That is, a man that through grace cometh to highness of thought, shall see that Jhesu only is highed above all creatures and he in Him.

And then is the soul alone, mickle estranged from fellowship of worldly lovers though her body be in midst among them ; full far departed from fleshly affections of creatures. It chargeth not though it never see man, nor speak with him, nor had comfort of him, if it might aye be so in that ghostly feeling. It feeleth so great homeliness of the blessed presence of our Lord Jhesu, and so mickle savour of Him, that it may lightly for His love forget the fleshly affection, and the fleshly mind of all creatures. I say not that it shall not love nor think of other creatures. But I say that it shall think on them in time, and see them and love them ghostly and freely, not fleshly and painfully as it did before. Of this onliness speaks the prophet thus : *Ducam eum in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus.* I shall lead her into onlistead, and I shall speak to her heart.² That is : Grace of Jhesu leadeth a soul from noyous company of fleshly desires into onliness of thought, and maketh it to forget the liking of the world and soundeth by sweetness

¹ Psa. lxiv. 6, 7. Compare Vulgate.

² Hosea ii. 14.

of His inspiration words of love in ears of the heart. Only is a soul when it loveth Jhesu and attendeth fully to Him, and hath lost the savour and the comfort of the world ; and that it might the better keep this onliness it fleeth the company of all men if it may, and seeketh onliness of body, for that mickle helpeth to onliness of soul and to the free working of love. The less letting that it hath without of vain jangling, or within of vain thinking, the more free it is in ghostly beholding, and so is it *in privy of heart*.

All without is a soul whilst it is overlaid and blinded with worldly love ; it is as common as the highway. For ilk a stirring that cometh of the flesh or of the fiend sinketh in, and goeth through it. But then through grace it is drawn into the privy chamber into the sight of our Lord Jhesu, and heareth His privy counsels and is wonderfully comforted in the hearing. Of this speaketh the prophet thus : *Secretum meum mihi ; secretum meum mihi*. My privy to me, my privy to me.¹ That is : The lover of Jhesu, through inspiration of His grace taken up from outward feeling of worldly love and ravished into privy of ghostly love, yieldeth thanking of Him, saying thus : *My privy to me*. That is, my Lord Jhesu Thy privy is showed to me and privily hid from all lovers of the world, for it is

¹ Isaiah xxiv. 16 (Vulgate).

called hid manna, that may lightlier be asked than told what it is. And that our Lord Jhesu behoteth to His lover thus : *Dabo sibi manna absconditum, quod nemo novit, nisi qui accipit.* That is : I shall give manna hid that no man knoweth but he that taketh it.¹ This manna is heavenly meat and angels' food, as Holy Writ saith. For angels are fully fed and filled with clear sight and burning love of our Lord Jhesu, and that is manna. For we may ask what it is, but not wit what it is. But the lover of Jhesu is not filled yet here, but he is fed by a little tasting of it whilst he is bound in this bodily life.

This tasting of manna is a lively feeling of grace, had through opening of the ghostly eyes. And this grace is not another grace than a chosen soul feeleth in beginning of his conversion ; but it is the same and the self grace, but it is otherwise felt and showed to a soul. For why, grace waxeth with the soul and the soul waxeth with grace, and the more clean that the soul is, far departed from love of the world, the more mighty is the grace, more inward and more ghostly showing the presence of our Lord Jhesu. So that the same grace that turneth first them from sin and maketh them beginning and profiting by gifts of virtues and exercise of good works, maketh them also perfect, and that

¹ Rev. ii. 17.

grace is called *a lively feeling of grace*, for he that hath it feeleth it well and knoweth well by experience that he is in grace. It is full lively to him, for it quickeneth the soul wonderfully and maketh it so whole that it feeleth no painful disease of the body, though it be feeble and sickly. For why, then is the body mightiest, most whole, and most restful, and the soul also.

Without this grace the soul cannot live but in pain, for it thinketh that it might aye keep it and nothing should put it away. And nevertheless yet it is not so, for it passeth away full lightly ; but nevertheless though the sovereign feeling pass away and withdraw, the relic liveth still, and keepeth the soul in soberness and maketh it for to desire the coming again. And this is also the wakeful sleep of the spouse, of the which Holy Writ saith thus : *Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat*. I sleep and my heart waketh.¹ That is : I sleep ghostly, when through grace the love of the world is slain in me, and wicked stirrings of fleshly desires are deaded so mickle that hardly I feel them, I am not vexed with them. Mine heart is made free ; and then it waketh, for it is sharp and ready for to love Jhesu and see Him. The more I sleep from outward things, the more wakeful am I in knowing of Jhesu and of inward things. I may not wake to Jhesu but if I sleep to the world.

¹ Cant. v. 2.

And therefore, the grace of the Holy Ghost shutting the fleshly eyes, doth the soul sleep from worldly vanity, and opening the ghostly eyes waketh into the sight of God's majesty hid under cloud of His precious manhood ; as the gospel saith of the Apostles when they were with our Lord Jhesu in His transfiguration, first they slept and then *vigilantes viderunt majestatem* : they wakening see His majesty.¹ By sleep of the Apostles is understood dying of worldly love through inspiration of the Holy Ghost ; by their wakening, contemplation of Jhesu. Through this sleep the soul is brought into rest from din of fleshly lust ; and through wakening it is raised up into the sight of Jhesu and ghostly things. The more that the eyes are shut in this manner sleep from the appetite of earthly thing, the sharper is the inner sight in lovely beholding of heavenly fairhead. This sleeping and this waking love worketh through the light of grace in the soul of the lover of Jhesu.

¹ Luke ix. 32.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

How special grace in beholding of Jhesu withdraweth sometimes from a soul, and how a soul shall have her in the absence and presence of Jhesu, and how a soul shall desire that in it is alway the gracious presence of Jhesu.

SHOW me then a soul that through inspiration of grace hath opening of the ghostly eyes into beholding of Jhesu ; that is departed and drawn out from love of the world, so far forth that it hath *purity and poverty of spirit, ghostly rest, inward silence and peace in conscience, highness of thought, onliness and privity of heart, waking sleep of the spouse ; that hath lost liking and joy of this world, taken with delice of heavenly savour, aye thirsting in softly seeking the blessed presence of Jhesu ;* and I dare hardly pronounce that this soul burneth all in love and shineth in ghostly light, worthy for to come to the name into the worship of the spouse, for it is reformed in feeling, made able and ready to contemplation. These are the tokens of inspiration in opening of the ghostly eyes. For why, when the eyes are opened the soul is in full feeling of all these virtues before said, for that time.

Nevertheless it falleth oft times that grace withdraweth in party, for corruption of man's frailty, and suffereth the soul fall into itself in fleshlihead, as it was before ; and then is the soul in sorrow and in pain, for it is blind and unsavoury and can no good. It is weak and unmighty, encumbered with the body and with all the bodily wits ; it seeketh and desireth after the grace of Jhesu again, and it may not find it. For Holy Writ saith of our Lord thus : *Postquam vultum suum absconderit, non est qui contempletur eum.* That is : After when our Lord Jhesu hath hid His face, there is none that may behold Him.¹ When He showeth Him, the soul may not unsee Him for He is light ; and when He hideth Him, it may not see Him, for the soul is murk. His hiding is but a subtle assaying of the soul, His showing is wonder merciful goodness in comfort of the soul.

Have thou no wonder, though the feeling of grace withdraw sometime from a lover of Jhesu. For Holy Writ saith the same of the spouse, that she fareth thus : *Quesivi et non inveni illum : vocavi et non respondit mihi.* I sought and I found Him not : I called, and He answered not.² That is, when I fall down to my frailty, then grace withdraweth ; for my falling is cause thereof, and not His fleeing. But then feel I pain of my wretchedness in His absence, and therefore I

¹ Job xxxiv. 29.

² Cant. iii. 1.

sought Him by great desiring of heart, and he gave Me no feelable answering. And then I cried with all my soul : *Revertere dilecte mi!* Turn again, thou my loved.¹ And yet it seemed as He heard me not. The painful feeling of myself and the assailing of fleshly loves and dread in this time, and the wanting of my ghostly strength, is a continual crying of my soul to Jhesu ; and nevertheless our Lord estrangeth Himself awhile and cometh not, cry I never so fast. For He is sure enough of His lover, that he will not turn again to worldly love fully, he may no savour have therein ; and therefore abideth He the longer.

But at the last when He will He cometh again, full of grace and of soothfastness, and visiteth the soul that languisheth in desire by seekings of love to His presence, and toucheth it and anointeth it full softly with the oil of gladness and maketh it suddenly whole from all pain ; and then crieth the soul to Jhesu in ghostly voice with a glad heart thus : *Oleum effusum nomen tuum.* Oil poured out is Thy name Jhesu.² Thy name is Jhesu, that is health ; then as long as I feel my soul sore and sick for sin, pained with the heavy burthen of my body, sorry and dreading for perils and wretchedness of this life, so long Lord Jhesu, Thy name is oil shut up, not oil poured out to me. But when I feel my soul

¹ Cant. ii. 17.

² Cant. i. 2.

suddenly touched with the light of grace, healed and softened from all the filth of sin, comforted in love and in light with ghostly strength and gladness unspeakable, then may I say with listy lauding and ghostly mirth to thee ; oil outpoured is Thy name Jhesu to me. For by the effect of Thy gracious visiting I feel well of Thy name the true expounding, that Thou art Jhesu, health. For only Thy gracious presence healeth me from sorrow and from sin.

Blessed is that soul that is aye fed in feeling of love in His presence, or is borne up by desire to Him in His absence. A wise lover is he, and a well taught, that soberly and reverently hath him in His presence, and lovely beholdeth Him without dissolute lightness, and patiently and easily beareth him in His absence without venomous despair and over painful bitterness.

This changeability of absence and presence of Jhesu that a soul feeleth is not perfection of the soul, nor it is not against the grace of perfection or of contemplation ; but in so mickle is perfection the less. For the more letting that a soul hath of itself from continual feeling of grace, the less is the grace ; though yet nevertheless is the grace in itself grace of contemplation. This changeability of absence and presence falleth as well in state of perfection as in state of beginning, but in another manner. For right as there is diversity of feeling in the presence of grace

atwixt these two states, right so is there in the absence of grace. And therefore he that knoweth not the absence of grace is ready to be deceived ; and he that observeth not the presence of grace is ungrateful to the visiting, whether he be in the state of beginners or of perfect. Nevertheless the more stableness that there is in grace, unhurt and unbroken, the lovelier is the soul and more like unto Him in whom is no manner changeability, as the Apostle saith: And it is full seemly that the soul spouse be like to Jhesu spouse in manners and in virtues, full accordant to Him in stableness of perfect love. But that falleth seldom ; nowhere but in the special spouse.

For he that perceiveth no changeability in feeling of his grace, but is ever whole and stable, unbroken and unhurt as him thinketh, he is either full perfect or full blind. He is perfect that is sequestered from all fleshly affections and communing with of all creatures, and all means are broken away of corruption and of sin atwixt Jhesu and his soul, fully oned to Him with softness of love. But this is only grace above man's kind. He is full blind that feigneth him in grace without ghostly feeling of God's inspiration, and setteth himself in a manner of stableness, as he were aye in feeling and in working of special grace, deeming that all is grace that he doth and feeleth without and within, thinking that what-

soever he do or speak is grace, holding himself unchangeable in specialty of grace. If there be any such, as I hope there is none, he is full blind in feeling of grace.

But then might thou say thus : that we should love only in trowth and not covet ghostly feelings nor regard them if they come, for the Apostle saith *Justus ex fide vivit* ; that is, the righteous man liveth in trowth.¹ Unto this I say that bodily feelings, be they never so comfortable, we should not covet, nor mickle regard if they come. But ghostly feelings such as I speak of now, if they come in the manner as I have said before, we should aye desire ; that are slaying of all worldly love, opening of the ghostly eyes, purity of spirit, peace in conscience, and all other before said. We should covet to feel aye the lively inspiration of grace made by the ghostly presence of Jhesu in our soul, if that we might ; and for to have Him aye in our sight with reverence, and aye feel the sweetness of His love by a wonderful homeliness of His presence. This should be our life and our feeling in grace, after the measure of His gift in whom all grace is, to some more and to some less ; for His presence is felt in divers manner-wise as He vouchsafe. And in this we should live, and work what longeth to us for to work on ; for without this we should not be able to live. For right as the soul is the life of the

¹ Heb. x. 38.

body, right so Jhesu is life of the soul by His gracious presence. And nevertheless this manner feeling, be it never so mickle, it is yet but trowth as in regard of that that shall be of the self-Jhesu in the bliss of heaven.

Lo, this feeling should we desire, for ilk a soul reasonable oweth for to covet with all the mights of it anighing to Jhesu and oneing to Him, through feeling of His gracious unseeable presence. How that presence is felt, it may better be known by experience than by any writing ; for it is the life and the love, the might and the light, the joy and the rest of a chosen soul. And therefore he that hath soothfastly once felt it, he may not forbear it without pain ; he may not undesire it, it is so good in itself and so comfortable. What is more comfortable to a soul here than for to be drawn out through grace from the vile noye of worldly business and filth of desires, and from vain affection of all creatures into rest and softness of ghostly love ; privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu, feelably fed with savour of His unseeable blessed face ? Soothly nothing, me thinketh. Nothing may make the soul of a lover full merry, but the gracious presence of Jhesu as He can show Him to a clean soul. He is never heavy nor sorry, but when he is with himself in fleshliness ; he is never full glad nor merry but when he is out of himself far, as he was with Jhesu in his ghostliness. And yet is that no

full mirth, for aye there hangeth an heavy lump of bodily corruption on his soul, and beareth it down and mickle letteth the ghostly gladness, and that mote aye be whilst it is here in this life.

But nevertheless, for I speak of changeability of grace, how it cometh and goeth, that thou mistake it not, therefore I mean not of the common grace that is had and felt in trowth and in good will to God, without the which having, and lasting therein, no man may be saved, for it is in the least chosen soul that liveth. But I mean of special grace felt by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in the manner as it is before said. The common grace, that is charity, lasteth whole whatsoever a man do, as long as his will and his intent is true to God, that he would not sin deadly, nor the deed that he wilfully doth is not forbid as for deadly sin, for this grace is not lost but through sin. And then is it deadly sin, when his conscience witnesseth with advisement that it is deadly sin and yet nevertheless he doth it ; or else his conscience is so blinded that he holdeth it no deadly sin, although he do the deed wilfully the which is forbid of God and of Holy Kirk as deadly sin.

Special grace felt through the unseeable presence of Jhesu, that maketh a soul a perfect lover, lasteth not aye alike whole in the highness of feeling, but changeably cometh and goeth as I have said before. Thus our Lord saith : *Spiritus*

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ubi vult spirat ; et vocem ejus audis, et nescis unde veniat, aut quo vadat. The Holy Ghost spireth where He will, and thou hearest His voice, but thou wost not when He cometh nor whither He goeth.¹ He cometh privily sometimes when thou art least aware of Him, but thou shalt well know Him or He go ; for wonderfully He stirreth and mightily He turneth thine heart into beholding of His goodness, and doth thine heart melt delectably as wax against the fire into softness of His love, and this is the voice that He soundeth. But then He goeth ere thou wit it. For He withdraweth Him somewhat, not all, but from excess into sobriety ; the highness passeth but the substance and the effect of grace dwelleth still, and that is as long as the soul of a lover keepeth him clear and falleth not wilfully to recklessness or dissolution in fleshliness, nor to outward vanity, as sometime it doth though it have no delight therein, for frailty of itself. Of this changeability in grace speak I of now.

¹ John iii. 8.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

A commendation of prayer offered to Jhesu of a soul contemplative, and how stableness in prayer is a secure work to stand in, and how every feeling of grace in a chosen soul may be said Jhesu, but the more clean a soul is the worthier is the grace.

THE soul of a man, whilst it is not touched with special grace, is blunt and boisterous to ghostly work, and can nought therein. It may not thereof for weakness of itself : it is both cold and dry, undevout and unsavoury in itself. But then cometh the light of grace, and through touching maketh it sharp and subtle, ready and able to ghostly work, and giveth it a great freedom and an whole readiness in will for to be buxom to all the stirring of grace, ready for to work after that grace stirreth. And then falleth it so sometimes, that grace stirreth the soul for to pray ; and how the soul prayeth then shall I tell thee.

The most special prayer that the soul useth and hath most comfort in I trow is the Pater noster, or else psalms of the psalter ; the Pater noster for lewd men, and psalms and hymns and

other service of Holy Kirk for lettered men. The soul prayeth then not in manner as it did before, nor in common manner of men by highness of voice or by reasonable speaking out ; but in full great stillness of voice and softness of heart. For why, his mind is not troubled nor teased with outward things, but whole gathered together in itself, and the soul is set as it were in a ghostly presence of Jhesu ; and therefore every word and every syllable is sounded savourly, sweetly and delectably, with full accord of mouth and of heart. For why, the soul is turned then all into fire of love, and therefore ilk a work that it privily prayeth is like to a sparkle springing out of a firebrand, that warmeth all the mights of the soul, and turneth them into love, and lighteneth them so comfortably that the soul list aye for to pray and do none other thing : the more it prayeth, the better it may, the mightier it is. For grace helpeth the soul well, and maketh all thing light and easy, that it list right well to psalm and sing the laudings of God with ghostly mirth and heavenly delight.

This ghostly work is food of the soul. And this prayer is of mickle virtue ; for it wasteth and bringeth to nought all temptations of the fiend privy and apparent, it slayeth all the mind and the liking of the world and of fleshly sins, it beareth up the body and the soul from painful feeling of wretchedness of this life, it keepeth

the soul in feeling of grace and working of love and nourisheth it aye alike hot and fresh as sticks nourish the fire. It putteth away all irking and heaviness of heart, and holdeth it in mirth, and in ghostly gladness. Of this prayer speaketh David thus : *Dirigatur oratio mea sicut incensum in conspectu tuo !* That is : Dressed be my prayer, Lord, as incense in Thy sight.¹ For right as incense that is cast in the fire maketh sweet smell by the reek stying up to the air ; right so a psalm savourly and softly sung or said in a burning heart, yieldeth up a sweet smell to the face of our Lord Jhesu and to all the court of heaven.

There dare no flesh fly rest upon the pot's brink boiling over the fire ; right so may there no fleshly delight rest upon a clear soul that is happed and warmed all in fire of love, boiling and blowing psalms and laudings to Jhesu. This is very prayer. This prayer is ever heard of Jhesu ; it yieldeth grace to Jhesu, and receiveth grace again, it maketh a soul homely and fellowly with Jhesu, and with all the angels of heaven. Use it who so may, the work is good and gracious in itself.

This manner prayer, although it be not full contemplation in itself, nor the working of love by itself, nevertheless it is a part of contemplation. For why, it may not be done on this manner wise but in plenty of grace through opening of the

¹ Psa. cxli. 2.

ghostly eyes, and therefore a soul that hath this freedom and this gracious feeling in prayer with ghostly savour and heavenly delight hath the grace of contemplation in manner as it is.

This prayer is a rich offering filled all in fatness of devotion, received by angels and presented to the face of Jhesu. The prayer of other men that are busied in active works is made of two words. For they oft times form in their hearts one word through thinking of worldly business, and sound in their mouth another word of the psalm sung or said ; and nevertheless if their intent be true, yet is their prayer good and needful, though it lack savour and sweetness. But this manner offered of a man contemplative is made but of one word. For as it is formed in the heart right so wholly it soundeth in the mouth, as it were nought but one thing that formeth and soundeth. And soothly no more it is, for the soul through grace is made whole in itself, so far departed from the fleshlihead that it is master of the body ; and then is the body nought else, but as an instrument and a trump of the soul, in the which the soul bloweth sweet notes of ghostly laudings to Jhesu.

This is the trump that David speaketh of thus : *Buccinate in neomenia tuba, in insigni solemnitatis vestrae.* Blow ye with a trump in the new moon.¹ That is, the souls that are re-

¹ Psa. lxxxi. 3.

formed in ghostly life through opening of the inner eyes, blow ye devoutly, sounding psalms with the trump of your bodily tongue. And therefore, for this prayer is so pleasing to Jhesu and so profitable to the soul, then is it good to him that is new turned to God, what that he be, that would please Him and coveteth for to have some quaint feeling of grace, for to covet this feeling ; that he might through grace come to this liberty of spirit, and offer his prayers and his psalms to Jhesu continually, stably, and devoutly, with whole mind and burning affection in Him, and have it nearly in custom when grace will stir him thereto.

This is a sure feeling and a soothfast. If thou may come thereto and hold it, thee need not therefore to run about here and there and ask questions of ilk ghostly man what thou shalt do, how thou shalt love God, and how thou shalt serve God and speak of ghostly matters that pass thy knowing, as perchance some do. That manner is not full profitable, but if more need make it. Keep thee to thy prayers stiffly, first with travail that thou might come afterward to this restful feeling of this ghostly prayer, and that shall teach wisdom enough to thee soothfastly without feigning or fantasy. And keep it forth if thou have it, and leave it not ; but if grace come otherwise and will reave it from thee for a time and make thee for to work on another

manner, then may thou leave it for a time and after turn again thereto. And he that hath this grace in prayer asketh not where upon he shall set the point of his thought in his prayer, whether upon the words that he saith, or else on God or on the name of Jhesu, as some ask. For the feeling of grace teacheth him well enough. For why, the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jhesu, and is made sure that it is Jhesu that it feeleth and seeth. I mean not Jhesu as He is in Himself in fullness of His blessed Godhead ; but I mean Jhesu as He will show Him to a clean soul holden in body, after the cleanness that it hath. For wit thou well, ilk a feeling of grace is Jhesu and may be called Jhesu, and after that the grace is more or less so feeleth the soul Jhesu more or less. Yea, the first feeling of special grace in a beginner, that is called grace of compunction and contrition for his sins, is verily Jhesu. For why, He maketh that contrition in a soul by His presence. But Jhesu is then full boisterously and rudely felt, full far from His godly subtlety, for the soul can no better nor may no better for uncleanness of itself then. Nevertheless afterward if the soul profit and increase in virtues and in cleanness, the same Jhesu and none other is seen and felt of the same soul when it is touched with grace. But that is more ghostly, near to the godly kind of Jhesu.

And soothly that is the most thing that Jhesu loveth in a soul, that it might be made godly and ghostly in sight and in love, like to Him in grace, to that that He is by kind ; for that shall be the end of all lovers. Then mayest thou be sure that which time that thou feelest thy soul stirred by grace, specially in that manner as it is before said, by opening of thy ghostly eyes thou seest and feelest Jhesu. Hold Him fast whilst thou may, and keep thee in grace, and let Him not lightly from thee. Look after none other Jhesu but that same, by feeling of that self grace more godly, that it might waxen in thee more and more; and dread thee not, though that Jhesu that thou feelest be not Jhesu as He is in His full Godhead, that thou shouldest therefore be deceived if thou leaned to thy feeling. But trust thou well, if thou be a lover of Jhesu, that thy feeling is true and that Jhesu is truly felt and seen of thee through His grace, as thou mayest see Him here. And therefore lean fully to thy feeling when it is gracious and ghostly, and keep it tenderly and have great dainty, not of thy self, but of it, that thou might see and feel Jhesu aye better and better. For grace shall ever teach thee by itself if thou will fall thereto, till thou come to the end.

But perchance thou beginnest to wonder why I say one time that grace worketh all this, and another time I say that love worketh, or Jhesu

worketh, or God worketh. Unto this I say thus, that when I say that grace worketh I mean love, Jhesu, and God : for all is one, and nought but one. Jhesu is love, Jhesu is grace, Jhesu is God ; and for He worketh all in us by His grace for love as God, therefore may I use what word of these four that me list, after my stirring in this writing.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

How a soul through opening of the ghostly eye receiveth a gracious love able to understand Holy Writ, and how Jhesu, that is hid in Holy Writ, showeth Himself to His lovers.

WHEN the soul of a lover feeleth Jhesu in prayer in the manner before said, and thinketh that it would never feel otherwise, nevertheless it falleth that sometime grace putteth silence to vocal praying and stirreth the soul to see and to feel Jhesu in another manner. And that manner is first to see Jhesu in Holy Writ; for Jhesu, that is all soothfastness, is hid and covered¹ therein, wound in a soft sendal under fair words, that He may not be known nor felt but of a clean heart. For why, soothfastness will not show itself to enemies, but to friends that love it and desire it with a meek heart. For soothfastness and meekness are full true sisters, fastened together in love and charity; and therefore is there no dividing of counsel atwixt them two. Meekness presumeth on soothfastness, and nothing of itself; and soothfastness troweth well on meekness, and so they accord

¹ MS. "hid and hilid."

wonder well. Then for as mickle as a soul of a lover is made meek through inspiration of grace by opening of the ghostly eyes, and seeth that it is nought of itself but only hangeth on the mercy and goodness of Jhesu, and lastingly is borne up by favour and help of Him only and truly desiring the presence of Him, therefore seeth it Jhesu ; for it seeth soothfastness of Holy Writ wonderly showed and opened, above study and travail and reason of man's kindly wit. And that may well be called the feeling and the perceiving of Jhesu, for Jhesu is well of wisdom, and by a little pouring of His wisdom into a clean soul He maketh the soul wise enough for to understand all Holy Writ. Not all at once in special beholding ; but through that grace the soul receiveth a new ableness, and a gracious habit for to understand it specially when it cometh to mind.

This opening and this clearness of wit is made by the ghostly presence of Jhesu. For right as the gospel saith of two disciples going to the castle of Emmaus, burning in desire and speaking of Jhesu, our Lord Jhesu appeared to them presently in likeness of a pilgrim and taught them the prophecies of Himself, and as the gospel saith : *Aperuit illis sensum, ut intelligerent Scripturas.* He opened to them clearness of wit that they might understand Holy Writ.¹ Right

¹ Luke xxiv. 45.

so the ghostly presence of Jhesu openeth the wit of His lover that burneth in desire to Him, and bringeth to his mind by ministering of angels the words of the sentences of Holy Writ unsought and unavised one after another, and expoundeth them readily, be they never so hard nor so privy. The more harder that they be and the further from man's reasonable understanding, the more delectable is the true showing of it when Jhesu is master. It is expounded and declared letterly, morally, mystically, and heavenly, if the matter suffer it. By the letter, that is lightest and most plain, is the bodily kind comforted ; by morality of Holy Writ, the soul is informed of vices and virtues, wisely to know depart the one from the tother. By mystihood it is illumined for to see the works of God in Holy Kirk, readily for to apply words of Holy Writ to Christ our head and to Holy Kirk that is His mystical body. And the fourth, that is heavenly, longeth only to the working of love, and that is when all soothfastness in Holy Writ is applied to love ; and for that is most like to heavenly feeling, therefore I call it heavenly. ✓

The lover of Jhesu is His friend, not for he hath deserved it but for Jhesu of His merciful goodness maketh him His friend by true accord ; and therefore as to a true friend that pleaseth Him with love, not serveth Him by dread as a thrall, He showeth His privities. Thus He saith

Himself to His Apostles : *Jam vos dixi amicos, quia quaecumque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci vobis.* Now I say that ye are My friends ; for I make known to you all things that I have heard of My Father.¹ To a clean soul that hath palate purified from filth of fleshly love, Holy Writ is lively food and sustenance delectable. It savoureth wonder sweet when it is well chewed by ghostly understanding. For why, the spirit of life is hid therein, that quickeneth all the mights of the soul and filleth them full with sweetness of heavenly savour and ghostly delight. But soothly him needeth for to have white teeth and sharp and well picked that should bite on this ghostly bread ; for fleshly lovers and heretics may not touch the inly flour of it. Their teeth are bloody and full of filth, and therefore they are fastened from feeling of this bread. By teeth are understood the inly wits of the soul, the which in fleshly lovers and heretics are bloody, full of sin and of worldly vanity ; they would, and cannot, come by the curiosity of their kindly wit to soothfast knowing of Holy Writ. For their wit is corrupt by the original sin and actual also, and is not yet healed through grace, and therefore they do but gnaw upon the bark without ; say they never so mickle thereof, the inly savour within feel they nought of. They are not meek, they are not clean for to see

¹ John xv. 15.

it ; they are not friends to Jhesu, and therefore He showeth them not His counsel.

The privy of Holy Writ is closed under key sealed with a signet of Jhesu's finger, that is the Holy Ghost ; and for this, without His love and His life may no man come in. He only hath the key of cunning in His keeping, as Holy Writ saith ; and He is Key Himself and He letteth in whom He will through inspiration of His grace, and breaketh not the seal. And that doth Jhesu to His lovers ; not to all alike, but to them that are specially inspired for to seek soothfastness in Holy Writ, with great devotion in praying and with mickle business in studying going before. These may come to the finding when our Lord Jhesu will show it.

See now then how grace openeth the ghostly eye, and cleareth the wit of the soul wonderly above the frailty of corrupt kind ; it giveth the soul a new ableness, whether it will read Holy Writ or hear or think it, for to understand truly and savourly the soothfastness of it in the manner before said, and for to turn readily all reasons and words that are bodily said into ghostly understanding. And that is no great marvel, for the same spirit expoundeth it and declareth it in a clean soul in comfort of it, that first made it ; and that is the Holy Ghost. And this grace may be and is as well in lewd as in lettered men, as anent the substance and the

true feeling of soothfastness and the ghostly savour in general ; though they see not so many reasons in special, for that needeth not. And when the soul is thus abled and lightened through grace, then it list for to be alone sometimes, out of letting or communing of all creatures, that it might freely assay his instrument, that I call his reason, in beholding of soothfastness that is contained in holy writing. And then there fall to mind words and reasons and sentences enow to occupy it in full ordinally and full soberly.

And what comfort and ghostly delight, savour and sweetness, a soul may feel then in this ghostly work through divers illuminations—inly perceivings, privy knowings and sudden touchings of the Holy Ghost—by assay the soul may wit and else not. And I trow that he shall not err, be so that his teeth, that are his inly wits, be kept white and clean from ghostly pride and from curiosity of kindly wit. I trow that David felt full great delight in this manner work when he said thus : *Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua ! Super mel ori meo.* How sweet are Thy speakings, Lord Jhesu, to my cheeks, over honey to my mouth.¹ That is : Lord Jhesu, Thine holy words, indited in Holy Writ, brought to my mind through grace, are sweeter to my cheeks, that are the affections of my soul, than honey is to my mouth. Soothly

¹ Psa. cxix. 103.

this is a fair work and an honest without painful travail, for to see Jhesu thus.

This is one manner sight of Jhesu as I said before : not as He is, but clothed under likeness of works and of words, *per speculum etiam in aenigmate* ; by a mirror and by a likeness, as the Apostle saith.¹ Jhesu is endless might, wisdom and goodness, righteousness, soothfastness, holiness and mercy. And what this Jhesu is in Himself may no soul see nor hear. But by effect of His working He may be seen through the light of grace, as thus : His might is seen by making of all creatures of nought, His wisdom in ordinate disposing of them, His goodness in saving of them, His mercy in forgiveness of sins, His holiness in gifts of grace, His righteousness in hard punishing of sin, His soothfastness in true rewarding of good works. And all this is expressed in Holy Writ, and this seeth a soul in Holy Writ with all other accidences that fall thereto. And wot thou well that such gracious knowings, in Holy Writ or in another writing that is made through grace, are nought else but sweet letters, sendings made atwixt a loving soul and Jhesu loved ; or else if I shall say soothlier, atwixt Jhesu the true lover and the souls loved of Him. He hath full great tenderness of love to all His chosen children, that are here closed in clay of this bodily life ; and therefore though

¹ I Cor. xiii. 12.

He be absent from them, high hid above in the bosom of the Father, fulfilled in delices of the blessed Godhead, nevertheless He thinketh upon them and visiteth them full often through His gracious ghostly presence, and comforteth them by His letters of Holy Writ, and driveth out of their hearts heaviness and irkness, doubts and dreads, and maketh them glad and merry in Him, truly trowing to all His behotings and meekly abiding fulfilling of His will.

Saint Paul said thus : *Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt, ut per consolationem Scripturarum, spem habeamus.* All that is written to our teaching, it is written that by comfort of writing we might have hope of salvation.¹ And this is another work of contemplation, for to see Jhesu in Scriptures, after opening of the ghostly eyes. The cleaner the sight is in beholding, the more comforted is the affection in the tasting. A full little savour felt in a clean soul of Holy Writ in this manner before said, should make the soul set little price by knowing of all the seven arts or of all worldly cunnings. For the end of this knowing is salvation of a soul in aye lasting life ; and the end of the other as for himself is but vanity and a passing delight, but if they be turned through grace to this end.

¹ Rom. xv. 4.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Of the privy voice of Jhesu sounding in a soul, whereby it shall be known ; and how all the gracious illuminations made in a soul be clept the speakings of Jhesu.

LO, these are fair new feelings in a clean soul ; and if a soul were fulfilled in such, it might be said and soothly that it were somewhat reformed in feeling, but not yet fully. For why, yet Jhesu showeth more and leadeth the soul inner, and beginneth to speak more homely and more lovely to a soul, and ready is the soul then for to follow the stirrings of grace. For the prophet saith : *Quocumque ibat spiritus, illuc gradiebantur et rotae sequentes eum.* Whither so goeth the spirit, thither go the wheels following him.¹ By wheels are understood true lovers of Jhesu, for they are round in virtue without angle of forwardness, and lightly whirling through readiness of will to the stirring of grace. For after that grace stirreth and teacheth, so they follow and work, as the prophet saith. But they have first a full sure assay and a true knowing of the voice of grace, or they may do so, that they be not

¹ Ezech. i. 20.

deceived by their own feigning, or by the midday fiend. Our Lord Jhesu saith thus of His lovers : *Oves meae vocem meam audiunt, et cognosco eas, et cognoscunt me meae.* My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they know Me.¹ The privy voice of Jhesu is full true, and it maketh a soul true. There is no feigning in it nor fantasy nor pride nor hypocrisy, but softness, meekness, peace, love and charity, and it is full of life and of grace. And therefore when it soundeth in a soul it is of so great might sometimes, that the soul suddenly layeth aside all that there is, praying, speaking, reading or thinking in the manner before said, and all manner bodily work, and listeneth thereto fully, hearing and perceiving in rest and in love the sweet sound of this ghostly voice, as it were ravished from the mind of all earthly things. And then sometime showeth Jhesu in this peace Himself as an awful master, and sometime as a reverend father, and sometime as a lovely spouse. And it keepeth the soul in a wonderful reverence and in a lovely beholding of Him, that the soul liketh well then and never so well as then. For it feeleth so great security and so great rest in Jhesu, and so mickle favour of His goodness, that it would aye be so and never do other work. It thinketh that it toucheth Jhesu, and through virtue of that unspeakable touching it is made whole and stable in itself,

¹ John x. 27, 14.

reverently beholding only Jhesu as if there were nothing but Jhesu one thing, and he another, borne up only by the favour and the wonderful goodness of Him ; that is, that thing that he seeth and feeleth.

And this feeling is oft times without special beholding of Holy Writ, nor but with few words formed in the heart ; not but among fall in sweet words according to the feeling, either loving or worshipping, or otherwise sounding as the heart liketh. The soul is full mickle departed from love or liking of the world through virtue of this gracious feeling, and also from mind of the world mickle in the mean time ; it taketh none heed thereof, for it hath no leisure thereto. But then sometime anon with this fall into a soul divers illuminations through grace ; the which illuminations I call the speakings of Jhesu and the sight of ghostly things. For wit thou well that all the business that Jhesu maketh about a soul is for to make it a true perfect spouse to Him in the highness and the fullness of love. Because that may not be done suddenly, therefore Jhesu, that is Love and of all lovers wisest, assayeth by many wises and by many wonderful means or it may come about ; and therefore that it might come to effect of true spousage He hath such gracious speakings in likeness to a wooer to a chosen soul. He showeth His jewels, mickle thing He giveth and more He

behoteth, and courteous dalliance He showeth. Often He visiteth with mickle grace and ghostly comfort as I have before said. But how He doth this in special all fully can I not tell thee, for it needeth not. Nevertheless somewhat shall I say, after that grace stirreth.

The drawing of a soul fully to perfect love is first by the showing of ghostly things to a clean soul, when the ghostly eyes is opened : not that a soul should rest therein, and make end there, but by that yet should seek Him and love Him that is highest of all only, without any beholding of any other thing than Himself is. But what are these ghostly things ? sayest thou ; for I speak often of ghostly things. To this I answer and say that ghostly thing may be said all the soothfastness of Holy Writ. And therefore a soul that through light of grace may see the soothfastness of it, it seeth ghostly things, as I have before said.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

How through the gracious opening of the ghostly eye a soul is made wise meekly and steadfastly for to see the diversity of degrees in Holy Church as travailling, and for to see angels kind.

NEVERTHELESS other ghostly things there be also, the which through light of grace are showed to the soul and are these. The kind of all reasonable souls, and the gracious working of our Lord Jhesu in them. The kind of angels blessed and reproved, and their working ; and the knowing of the blessed Trinity after that grace teacheth.

Holy Writ saith in the Book of Songs of the spouse thus : *Surgam, et circuibo civitatem; et quaeram quem diligit anima mea.* I shall rise and I shall go about the city and I shall seek Him that my soul loveth.¹ That is, I shall rise into highness of thought and go about the city. By this city is understood the university of all creatures bodily and ghostly, ordained and ruled under God by laws of kinds, of reason, and of grace. I go about this city,² when I behold the

¹ Cant. iii. 2.

² MS. "I umbigo this citee."

kinds and the causes of bodily creatures, the gifts of grace and the blisses of ghostly creatures ; and in all these I seek Him that my soul loveth. It is fair looking with the inner eyes on Jhesu in bodily creatures, for to see His might, His wisdom and His goodness in ordinance of their kinds ; but it is mickle fairer looking on Jhesu in ghostly creatures. First in reasonable souls both of chosen and reproved, for to see the merciful calling of Him to His chosen ; how He turneth them from sin by light of His grace ; how He helpeth them, teacheth them, chastiseth them, comforteth them ; He righteth, He cleanseth, He feedeth ; how He maketh them burning in love and in light by plenty of His grace. And this doth He not to one soul only, but to all His chosen, after measure of His grace. Also of all the reproved, how rightfully He forsakes them and leaveth them in their sin and doth them no wrong ; how He rewardeth them in this world, suffering them for to have fulfilling of their will, and after this for to punish them endlessly.

Lo, this is a little beholding of Holy Kirk whilst it is travailling in this life ; for to see how black and how foul it seemeth in souls that are reproved, how fair and how lovely it is in chosen souls. And all this ghostly sight is nought else but the sight of Jhesu ; not in Himself, but in His merciful privy works and in

His hard righteous dooms, ilk day showed and renewed to reasonable souls. Also over this for to see with the ghostly eyes the pains of reproved and the joy and the bliss of chosen souls, it is full comfortable. For soothfastness may not be seen in a clean soul without great delight and wonderful softness of burning love.

Also the sight of angels' kind ; first of damned, and after that of the blessed. It is a full fair contemplation of the fiend in a clean soul, when grace bringeth the fiend to the sight of the soul as a clumsy caitiff bound with the might of Jhesu, that he may nought hurt. Then the soul beholdeth him, not bodily but ghostly, seeing his kind and his malice ; and turneth him upside down, and spoileth him and rendeth him all to nought. It scorneth him and despiseth him and setteth nought by his malice. Thus biddeth Holy Writ when it saith thus : *Verte impium, et non erit*. Turn the wicked, that is the fiend, upside down, and he shall be as nought.¹ Mickel wonder hath the soul that the fiend hath so mickle malice and so little might. There is no creature so unmighty as he is, and therefore it is a great cowardice that men dread him so mickle. He may no thing do without leave of our Lord Jhesu, not so mickle as enter into a swine, as the gospel saith. Mickel less may he then noye any man.

¹ Prov. xii. 7.

And then if our Lord Jhesu give him leave for to trouble us, it is full worthily and full mercifully done that our Lord Jhesu doth. And therefore welcome be our Lord Jhesu, by Himself and by all His messengers. The soul dreadeth no more then the blustering of the fiend, than the stirring of a mouse. Wonder wrath is the fiend if he durst say nay ; but his mouth is stopped with his own malice, his hands are bound as a thief worthy to be deemed and hanged in hell, and then the soul accuseth him and rightfully deemeth him after he hath deserved. Wonder not of this saying, for Saint Paul meant the same when he said thus : *Fratres, nescitis quoniam angelos judicabimus?* Brethren, wit thee not well that we shall deem angels,¹ that are wicked spirits through malice, that were made good angels by kind, as who saith. This deeming is figured before the doom in contemplative souls ; for they feel a little tasting, in likeness of all that shall be done afterward by our Lord Jhesu openly in soothfastness.

Shamed and disgraced is the fiend greatly in himself when he fares thus with a clean soul. He would fain flee away and he may not, for the might of the eyes holdeth him still ;² and that hurteth him more than all the fire of hell.

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 3.

² MS. 9, "the holi gooste hooldeth hym stille."

Wonder meekly falleth the soul to Jhesu then,
with hearty laudings and thankings that He
so mightily saveth a simple soul from all the
malice of so fell an enemy through His great
mercy.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

How by the same light of peace the blessed angels' kind may be seen ; and how Jhesu is as God and man above all creatures after the soul may see Him here.

AND then after this by the same light may the soul see ghostly the fairhead of angels, the worthiness of them in kind, the subtlety of them in substance, the confirmings of them in grace, and the fullness of endless bliss ; the sundrihead of orders, the distinctions of persons, how they live all in light of endless soothfastness and how they burn all in love of the Holy Ghost after the worthiness of orders, how they see and love and praise Jhesu in blessed rest without ceasing. There is no sight of body nor of figure in imagination in this manner working, but all ghostly of ghostly creatures.

Then beginneth the soul for to have great acquaintance of these blessed spirits, and a great fellowship. They are full tender and full busy about such a soul for to help it, they are masters for to teach it, and often through their ghostly presence and touching of their light drive out phantoms from the soul. And they illumine the

soul graciously, they comfort the soul by sweet words suddenly sounded in a clean heart, and if any disease fall ghostly they serve the soul and minister to it all that it needeth. Thus Saint Paul said of them : *Nonne omnes sunt administratorii spiritus, missi propter eos qui hereditatem capient salutis ?* Wot thee not well that all holy spirits are ministers, sent of Jhesu for them that take the heritage of health ? ¹ These are chosen souls. As who saith thus : for wit thou well, that all this ghostly working of words and of reasons brought to the mind, and such fair likeness, are made by the ministry of angels, when the light of grace abundantly shineth in a clean soul. It may not be told by tongue the feelings, the lightnings, the graces and the comforts in special, that clean souls perceive through favourable fellowship of blessed angels. The soul is well at ease with them for to behold how they do, that it would attend to nought else.

But then with the help of the angels, yet the soul seeth more. For knowing riseth above all this in a clean soul ; and that is to behold the blessed kind of Jhesu. First of His glorious manhood, how it is worthily highed above all angels kind ; and then after of His blessed Godhead, for by knowing of creatures is known the Creator. And then beginneth the soul for to perceive a little of the privities of the blessed

¹ Heb. i. 14.

Trinity. It may well enough, for light of grace goeth before and therefore she shall not err as long as she holdeth her with the light.

Then is it opened soothfastly to the eyes of the soul the onehead in substance and distinction of persons in the blessed Trinity, as it may be seen here, and mickle other soothfastness of this blessed Trinity pertinent to this matter, the which is openly declared and showed by writing of holy doctors of Holy Kirk. And wit thou well that the same and the self soothfastness of the blessed Trinity that these holy doctors, inspired through grace, write in their books in strengthening of our trowth a clean soul may see and know through the self light of grace. I will not express too mickle of this matter here specially, for it needeth not.

Wonder great love feeleth the soul with heavenly delight in beholding of this soothfastness, when it is made through special grace ; for love and light go both together in a clean soul. There is no love that riseth of knowing and of special beholding that may touch so near our Lord Jhesu, as this love may ; for why, this knowing only is worthiest and highest in itself of Jhesu God and man, if it be specially showed by the light of grace. And therefore is the fire of love flaming of this more burning, than it is of knowing of any creature bodily or ghostly.

And all these gracious knowings felt in a soul

of the university of all creatures, in manner before said, and of our Lord Jhesu maker and keeper of all this fair university, I call them fair words and sweet speakings of our Lord Jhesu to a soul the which He will make His true spouse. He showeth privities and proffereth rich gifts of His treasure, and arrayeth the soul with them full honestly. She need not be ashamed with the company of her fellows for to appear afterwards to the face of Jhesu her spouse. All these lovely dalliances of privy speech atwixt Jhesu and a soul may be called an hid word, of the which Holy Writ saith thus : *Porro ad me dictum est verbum absconditum, et venas susurri ejus percepit auris mea*. Soothly to me is said an hid word, and the veins of his whispering mine ear hath perceived.¹ The inspiration of Jhesu is an hid word, for it is privily hid from all lovers of the world, and showed to His lovers ; through the which a clean soul perceiveth readily the veins of His murmuring, that are specially showing of His soothfastness. For ilk a gracious knowing of soothfastness, felt with inly savour and ghostly delight, is a privy whispering of Jhesu in the ear of a clean soul.

Him behoveth for to have mickle cleanness in soul, in meekness and in all other virtues, and to be half deaf to noise of worldly jangling, that should wisely perceive these sweet ghostly whisperings. This is the voice of Jhesu, of

¹ Job iv. 12.

which David saith thus : *Vox Domini praeparantis cervos, et revelabit condensa.* The voice of our Lord Jhesu making ready harts, and He shall show the thicket.¹ That is : The inspiration of Jhesu maketh souls light as harts that start from the earth over bushes and briars of all worldly vanity ; and He showeth to them the thicket, that are His privities, that may not be perceived but by sharp eyes. These beholdings soothfastly grounded in grace and in meekness, make a soul wise and burning in desire to the face of Jhesu. These are the ghostly things that I spake of before, and they may be called new gracious feelings. And I do but touch them a little, for wissing of thy soul. For a soul that is clean, stirred by grace to use of this working, may see more in an hour of such ghostly matter, than might be written in a great book.

¹ Psa. xxix. 9.

EXPLICIT HIC FINIS.

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